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Narrative Curriculum Making As Identity Making: Intersecting Family, Cultural And School Landscapes

by

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For my mom and dad who first taught me
the importance of attending to lives

Abstract

My study began with questions about youth's identities, their stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), as they negotiate schools. Engaging in course work and participating at a weekly research issues table, my questions of youth's identities shaped my research puzzle: What might I learn by inquiring into experiences where youths' and families' stories to live by intersect, and bump against, school stories? How might inquiring into continuities and discontinuities youth and families experience in schools deepen understandings of cultural, institutional and social narratives shaping family and school stories? How might our inquiry expand knowledge about the meeting of diverse lives on school landscapes?

Three youth, Muskaan, Abby and Tessa, and one or both of their parents, engaged in narrative inquiry with me. Living alongside each girl in school, and engaging in research conversations with them and their parent(s), I drew on two narrative ways of understanding identity making. The first was to see youth's and families' stories to live by as composed and re-composed as they lived on and among shifting family, school and cultural landscapes. The second was that as youths' and teachers' stories to live by interacted with each other, with school stories and subject matter, they were in the midst of negotiating a curriculum of lives (Clandinin et al, 2006).

Inquiring into Tessa's, Abby's, Muskaan's and their parent(s)' experiences expanded my understandings of identity making within curriculum making. Earlier I saw a curriculum of lives as shaped by family stories. Through inquiry I came to see that the unfolding of a curriculum of lives among youth, subject matter, teachers, and milieu can reverberate into and shape family and institutional stories. I also saw the deeply multi-

layered nature of curriculum making. While curriculum making is shaped in the meeting of a teacher's stories, youths' stories, subject matter stories and school stories, each of these curriculum commonplaces (Schwab, 1962) shapes, and is shaped by, intergenerational family and cultural landscapes. I subsequently brought these new understandings of curriculum making to an exploration of possibilities for teacher education.

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Chapter One: Narrative Beginnings

> It was lunch time and Dean[1], a youth in Grade 8 whose third period class earlier in the morning was Food Studies, returned to the lab as it was also his designated lunch room. As Dean interacted with a group of friends who were not enrolled in Food Studies and whom I did not know, I felt his sense of familiarity in the room and listened as he told stories of our class earlier that morning. Hearing Dean's stories, I was struck by the differences between his student experiences and my teacher experiences of our class together. Walking past the kitchen area where I was working, Dean stopped, momentarily, to say "Hi." I returned his greeting and picked up on the stories he was sharing with his lunchtime friends by saying that while it's good to have him in class and that I'm glad he's enjoying it, he needs to "get better." Dean's facial expression turned to surprise and, respectfully, he responded by saying he was trying to "be good." (Memory Reconstruction[2], September 2003)

My memory of this moment lived in a junior high Food Studies classroom lingered with me long after my living through it. Initially, I felt troubled by how I responded to Dean, that is, by my telling him that he needed to "get better." I did not see responding to youth in this way as typical of the stories I live by[3] as a teacher and I knew I needed to think more about who Dean and I each were as our lives met in this moment. My thinking was also consumed with the sincerity I felt in Dean's response when he said

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[1] Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of people and places made visible throughout this text.

[2] For me, the term "memory reconstruction" means a field text which is a remembered reconstruction of an earlier event or situation.

[3] Stories to live by is a narrative term conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) as a way to understand the interconnectedness of knowledge, context and identity. They wrote, "stories to live by, is a phrase used … to refer to identity, is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context" (p. 4).

he was trying to "be good." Why, I wondered, was I missing seeing him in this "good" way. How were my understandings of Dean shaping, and being shaped by, my positioning within the school. Even though I had taught Food Studies in other junior and senior high contexts, I was new to Eastpark and we were only in the midst of the second week of school. This meant that, prior to Dean's and my lunch time conversation, we had spent only four 48-minute classes together; a total of just over three hours which, in the wholeness of each of our lives, was miniscule. Were my thoughts about Dean influenced by my newness to Eastpark which left me unable to see him in his particularity? Was I, as Greene (1995) wrote, seeing Dean small, "see[ing] from a detached point of view …watch[ing] behaviors from the perspective of a system … concerned with trends and tendencies" (p. 10)? Or, was Dean, as Bateson (1994) explored, outside my range of focus? Exploring different ways of attending or seeing, Bateson wrote:

> I know that if I look very narrowly and hard at anything I am likely to see something new—like the life between the grass stems that only becomes visible after moments of staring. Softening that concentration is also important—I've heard that the best way to catch the movement of falling stars is at the edge of vision. (pp. 103-104)

Was I concentrating so hard on being who I wanted to be as a teacher within this new school context—planning and teaching in ways attentive to students' diverse physical, learning, ethnic, language, religious and subject matter needs; organizing physical spaces that encouraged learning and that attended to relationship-building among students and myself; and, coming to know and trying to meet expectations of my colleagues—that I

was failing to see what was unfolding at the edges of my vision? Had I, in all of this, not yet been able to catch the movements of Dean's unfolding life?

Thinking Narratively About Lives In School

By the time Dean's life and my life met in the Food Studies classroom at Eastpark School, I had been teaching for about 15 years. By this time, as well, I had begun to think narratively about lives in school because of previous opportunities to engage in narrative inquiries. These experiences included my inquiry into my teaching experiences for my masters thesis (Huber, 2000), engaging as a teacher co-researcher in a collaborative doctoral study (Huber, 2000 & Whelan, 2000) and engaging as a research assistant in one of the narrative inquiries that shaped our coauthored book, *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers* (Clandinin, Huber, Huber, Murphy, Murray Orr, Pearce & Steeves, 2006). These opportunities to live both as a teacher and as a narrative inquirer meant that as I tried to understand the meeting of Dean's and my lives, I did so narratively by working with Clandinin's and Connelly's (2000) conceptualization of a "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space" (p. 50).

Using Dewey's work as the foundation of this narrative inquiry space, Clandinin and Connelly explored:

> our terms are personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third. Using this set of terms, any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal

> matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places. (p. 50)

The personal-social dimension of this narrative inquiry space moves me to inward and outward questions, wonders and connections—inward "to the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" and outward "toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment" (p. 50). Traveling backward and forward from the moment I attend to "temporality—past, present, and future" (p. 50). Place "attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes" (p. 51).

For months following Dean's and my lunchtime conversation, my thinking often returned to my memories, and feelings of discomfort, around this lived moment. How, I wondered, might my understandings of Dean and of the landscape of Eastpark school shift as I worked toward trying to see them "big?" Greene (1995) wrote:

> To see things or people big, one must … view them in their integrity and particularity…. One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face. (p. 10)

What stories of teaching and learning was Dean bringing to school and to our Food Studies classroom? How did he story himself? What stories did he "live, tell, retell and relive" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 246) of his unfolding life and how were these shifting accounts shaped by the cultural and family landscapes on which he lived?

Exploring qualities of experience, Dewey (1938) highlighted that an experience is educative, or promotes growth, only when it continues to move us forward on "the

experiential continuum" (p. 28). Mis-educative experiences, those that are disconnected from one another, have the "effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25). What continuities and discontinuities lived between Dean's and my experiences and how were our stories being shaped by the particularities of the landscape on which our lives were meeting? What might I learn by inquiring into intersections between Dean's and my lived stories as they bumped up against each other and with dominant stories shaping Eastpark school landscape?

Using Clandinin's and Connelly's conceptualization of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as the framework for this chapter, I reconsider my narratives of experience and explore stories I carried in me to Eastpark school and as I interacted with Dean. I also explore continuities and discontinuities I experienced between my stories as a teacher and those I encountered as I moved onto the landscape of Eastpark school. Inquiring in these multi-directions lets me wonder about continuities and discontinuities Dean might have experienced and, in this, to begin to travel toward understanding his world. Attempting to engage in understanding Dean's world I show how attention to conflicting stories and to the tensions they shape, has drawn me to research puzzles around the meeting of family stories and school stories shaped by social, cultural and institutional narratives.

Traveling In Multiple Directions Across Multiple Worlds

Each time I returned to the moment between Dean and myself, I felt a deep sense of inner tension. Over time, I became increasingly intrigued by this continuing tension and began to pay attention to its presence in multiple places in my told story. A particularly intense place of tension surfaced for me at the point in my story where I told

Dean he needed to "get better." Puzzling over my feelings of tension, I wondered, why they heightened in this one particular place. Wondering in this way drew me to Lugones' (1987) explorations of how "we inhabit 'worlds' and travel across them and keep all the memories" (p. 14). Playing with ideas that as our lives unfold we move into and between multiple worlds, Lugones showed that as we "'world'-travel" across "worlds" we construct images of who we are and what we are about as well as images of who others are and what they are about. Carrying forward these images from across worlds, we gain deeper understandings of ourselves, of others and of the contexts in which we live.

Thinking hard about my response to Dean reconnected me with other worlds I have inhabited and with images I have of myself in those contexts. In particular, I was pulled backward in time and place to a moment between myself and a Grade 11 Chemistry 20 teacher, a time in my life when I felt viewed by a teacher in small, systemic ways—perhaps in similar ways to how I might have been seeing Dean and how he may have experienced my developing story of him.

> I wait in the hallway for the last few straggling Chemistry 10 students to leave the Chemistry lab. They have been joking and laughing with Mr. Simpson since their class together ended about 10 minutes earlier. I think to myself, "Well, at least I know Mr. Simpson is in his usual good humor." As the last of the students leave, I walk into the classroom. Mr. Simpson is already eating his lunch and I hear my stomach rumble in response. I ask if he has time to help me. Somewhat hesitantly, I explain that I'm having trouble with concepts covered on our last unit exam. We have just finished our second last unit of the term and I know I am barely passing Chemistry 20. Standing on what feels like the edge of possibly failing the course

is neither comfortable nor acceptable to me. Mr. Simpson continues eating as he motions for me to sit beside him. Pulling a nearby chair alongside his, I open my binder and shuffle through a few papers before finding the unit exam returned during our previous class. My barely passing grade seems to leap out from the front page. I try to hide it by pushing the top of my exam under the array of papers scattered across Mr. Simpson's desk, even though I recognize he already knows my mark. I begin by saying that during the previous evening I reviewed my exam to try to understand my mistakes. And, I say that while I now think I understand some of my mistakes I am still struggling with why some of the formulas I used were wrong. Mr. Simpson pulls the top of my exam out from under the other papers and flips through its pages. After a moment he asks, "Why are you using your lunch time to get extra help with this stuff? What do you think you need it for?" Surprised by his questions and the tone of seriousness in his voice, I struggle for an answer. Mr. Simpson is usually only serious when he is angry. To myself I wonder, "Why is he angry? Can't he understand I am trying but that I just don't get some of it? Perhaps, I was wrong and he isn't in a good mood." I say, "I am here because I want to pass Chemistry 20 so I can take Chemistry 30. I want to graduate with as much of my senior matriculation[4] as possible." I know the requirements for a senior matriculation are two Science courses and, at this point, I am only taking Chemistry as well as Math 20, English 20 and Social 20. I know Mr. Simpson is also aware that I am only registered in

[4] During the mid 1980s, a senior matriculation meant completing high school with a minimum of 100 credits. Credits needed to be granted in Social 30, Math 30, English 30, and two Sciences (Chemistry 30, Biology 30 or Physics 30). A senior matriculation was required to apply for university directly following high school. The only other way into university was to apply as an adult student which meant being 21 years of age or older.

one Science course. With the same serious tone in his voice and a solemn look etched across his face, he continues, "I know you find Chemistry difficult so I don't understand why you want to continue with it. I mean, I want you to think about it. You know, when you finish high school you are probably going to get married, probably to Jay; you'll probably have children and be a housewife. So why bother with Chemistry? You won't need it to be a good housewife." Stunned by his words, I can't respond. Instead, I feel a rush of emotions—anger, shame, hurt, shock, disbelief, embarrassment, mistrust—building inside me. Silently, I wonder, "Is he serious? Why does he think this is all that my future could hold? Who does he think he is to judge me in this way?" I sense the heat of my emotions rising and spreading throughout my body. I imagine they are also beginning to show in my face. (Memory Reconstruction, Fall 2003)

Returning to this memory of myself as a struggling Chemistry 20 student drew forward many wonders for me around how this moment between Mr. Simpson and me shaped how I saw myself in relation to Mr. Simpson and, as well, how the memories I carry of myself in this world have shaped, and continue to shape, who I am and who I am becoming as a teacher. Recalling the multiple emotions I felt, as well as the difficulty I had responding to Mr. Simpson when he shared what he saw as possible future stories in my life, makes visible gaps between his and my understandings of who I was as a student in this classroom and, as well, who I could become within and outside of this school context. Carrying this experience with Mr. Simpson alongside the moment I lived with Dean, I wondered, what emotions did Dean experience when I told him that he needed to "get better." Had he also felt anger, shame, hurt, shock, disbelief, embarrassment and

mistrust like I experienced with Mr. Simpson? Was it this memory, these emotions, I carried from the world between Mr. Simpson and myself that heightened the tensions I felt each time I thought about my saying to Dean that I saw him as needing to "get better?"

In a similar way to how my story of my experiences alongside Mr. Simpson made visible gaps between his and my understandings of who I was and who I was becoming, I wondered, what gaps might Dean have felt between his and my understandings of who he was and who he was becoming. What might be his future tellings and retellings of this moment between us?

Awakening To My Learning To Name Myself Differently At Home And At School

Reflecting on my experiences alongside Mr. Simpson, I remember naming myself as capable of learning and of passing Chemistry 20 and 30 in similar ways to how I *knew* I would be successful in other courses. From my previous in-school experiences, the formal and informal ways many of my past and present teachers interacted with me, as well as through ways in which I was storied on progress reports, I came to *know* my student self as: academically average but capable of achieving higher grades if I would put in more effort; nice but, at times, having too much attitude; talking and asking far too many questions; and, far too preoccupied with my social life with peers. Over my time in the small rural Kindergarten to Grade 12 school I attended, as I transitioned from an elementary to junior high to senior high student, I became increasingly familiar and comfortable with these stories of who I was as a student being told to me and about me. While I knew my parents wanted, and in many ways expected, my efforts to match my abilities and for me to live stories of being respectful and responsible, I was satisfied

with, and unmotivated to maintain more than, average grades. My complacent (dis)satisfaction and (un)motivation in each course I took were inextricably interwoven with how much I liked and respected the teacher, the ways in which the teacher interacted with me, and how interested I was in the subject matter.

As I entered into Chemistry 20, even though I had found the subject matter of Chemistry 10 challenging, I imagined familiar and comfortable stories of who I was as a student continuing and that I would complete Chemistry 20 with an average final grade. Mr. Simpson had been my Science, Biology, and Chemistry teacher since Grade 9 and I liked both how he taught as well as how he interacted with students. While I neither particularly enjoyed the subject matter of Chemistry 20 nor found it easy to learn, I saw it as the necessary stepping stone to Chemistry 30, one of the requirements for me to achieve a senior matriculation. As a high school student, I unquestioningly believed the story commonly told by teachers that completing high school with a senior matriculation would open up more possibilities and alternatives for me as an adult. I not only believed a high school matriculation was the beginning of the road toward post-secondary education but that it would also ensure for me an economically successful career. In addition to wanting a successful future, one that I imagined would include post-secondary education, I had also not wanted stories told about me that I was incapable of learning or that I was at ease with failure.

Recalling how I was storied and how I understood myself as a student, I recognize that who Mr. Simpson saw me being, and becoming, fell outside stories I saw myself living. Embedded into his comments were stories that, until that moment, I had neither heard told about me nor imagined myself living out. His story, at least in my memory of

this experience, of who I was and who I was becoming, was neither coherent with the student stories I held of myself nor with friend, peer, and family stories told about me and to me. Carr's (1986) explorations of the need for coherence in our lives, similar to Dewey's (1938) understandings of experiences where we feel continuity, helped me more fully understand the inner conflicts I experienced in Mr. Simpson's comments. Carr wrote:

> Our lives admit of sometimes more, sometimes less coherence; they hang together reasonably well, but they occasionally tend to fall apart. Coherence seems to be a need imposed on us whether we seek it or not. Things need to make sense. We feel the lack of sense when it goes missing. (p. 97)

Reflecting on the reconstructed moment between Mr. Simpson and me, I realize it might have been from a place of incoherence and of stories bumping up against each other that my rush of emotions and inability to respond emerged.

Although, over time, I think I grew comfortable with living student stories of not working to the fullest of my capabilities and of being satisfied with mediocrity, these were not stories that flowed across other worlds I inhabited, particularly the world of my family. From my earliest childhood memories I recall my parents trying to teach my siblings and me to live by stories of taking pride in our work. And, while they expected our work to be well done, doing something well was not as neatly or rigidly defined at home as it was by the marks shaping my school experiences. Instead, at home, "well done" could look different between my siblings and me and across the differing types of work with which we engaged. I remember, as a young teenager, the first time my dad asked me to rake hay. I was excited as I saw this job as an opportunity to work on my tan

which, at that time in my life, was of highest priority. It was not until I arrived in the field with my dad and he showed me the particularities of the job that I started to wonder if there might not have been a much easier way to contribute to our summertime farm work while also getting a tan. After several hours of raking (rolling two swaths of cut hay into one so that the underside of each swath was turned upward and would dry so it could be baled) and with increasing confidence in my abilities, I drove the tractor at a faster and faster pace. Not only did I want my dad to be proud of the amount of work I had accomplished but I also knew the quality of the hay was highest if it was baled soon after being raked. Plus, driving the tractor fast was fun. Wanting to be as close to finished raking the hay as possible by the time my dad returned to check it for dryness, I was soon only slowing down slightly as I maneuvered the tractor and rake around the curves and corners of the swaths, corners and curves that necessarily followed the terrain of the field. Given the warmth of the sun as well as the gentle breeze that had blown throughout the afternoon, and the way my exposed skin was turning red, I knew the hay must be drying quickly.

When my dad arrived to the field, left the truck at the edge of the outer swath and walked across the field checking various swaths for dryness, I imagined him happily taking note of both my efforts and the speed at which I was completing the work. While he was happy with my efforts and told me so, I remember him also pointing out the many places where I missed gathering hay from the original two swaths into the one raked swath. Although his time was limited because the hay was dry enough to start baling, my dad took time to remind me of the reasons we were spending the resources to bale this hay. He explained a story I already knew well and had seen evidence of throughout my

years, that is, that we needed all the hay if we were to feed the cows throughout the winter months until there was green grass for them the following spring. I knew that, as a family, we could not afford to be wasteful with our time or equipment. Then, my dad questioned when I had learned, from either him or my mom, that rushing or cutting corners was satisfactory. He told me that my performance, which either left some of the hay wasted in the field or made more work for the person running the baler as s/he drove all over the field to pick up the extra feed, was a concern. As he turned to leave, I remember my dad calling back over his shoulder that he was going home to get the baler and would be back in half an hour. During this time he wanted me to finish raking the remaining hay and, as well, to return to the places I missed, getting that hay, too, into the swaths. When my dad returned to the field with the baler, I was finished. All of the hay was neatly in raked swaths.

While at school, for the most part, I was learning to live stories of not pushing beyond mediocrity, at home, I was learning that mediocrity was unacceptable to my parents. While I knew I always had a space to learn—to ask questions and to be shown—alongside my parents, I was also coming to understand that they expected my work and learning to demonstrate attention to details. Only gathering 60% or 70% of the hay was not sufficient, whereas in school, my achievement of marks of 60% or 70% seemed to me to be seen as acceptable by my teachers.

Although at the time of Mr. Simpson's and my lunchtime conversation I was not attending to these differences between my family and school experiences—differences between the stories I lived in my family and community and the stories I lived in school—moving backward in time and place in my experience has helped me to think

further about my response to Dean. Returning to how my comment to him about his needing to "get better" was simply left hanging, I wondered what sense Dean made of it. He could not have known if I was referring to his academic performance, work habits, ways of interacting with me or others, or so on. Unlike my dad, who took time to explain why and how my performance needed to improve, I had not explored what I meant with Dean. How, I wondered, might my response have shaped feelings for Dean of differences between home and school—differences between the stories he lived in his family and community and the stories he lived in school.

Understanding School Contexts Narratively

My understandings of school contexts are grounded in Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) metaphor of a "professional knowledge landscape." They developed this metaphor as a way to describe the complex historical, temporal, personal, professional, relational, intellectual, and moral qualities of schools. Clandinin and Connelly showed that two different epistemological and moral places—in-classroom and out-of-classroom places—structure the professional knowledge landscape of schools. As teachers move between these two places they can, and often do, experience dilemmas and tensions. One way to understand how teachers manage these dilemmas is by attending to an interconnected set of stories—teacher stories, stories of teachers, school stories and stories of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). As these often differing stories meet on the professional knowledge landscape of schools, one of the ways to understand the tensions shaped in these meetings is that conflicting and competing stories can emerge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 125). Conflicting stories are understood as stories that collide with the dominant stories of school whereas competing stories live in dynamic but positive tension

with the dominant stories of school. These narrative ways of understanding school contexts that do not smooth out tension enabled me to continue to inquire into my interactions with Dean.

Thinking Again About The Meeting Of Dean's And My Lives

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) described stories of school as stories told about a particular school by people such as school board officials, families and practitioners both in and outside the school context. Bringing this understanding of stories of school to the school landscape where Mr. Simpson's and my life intersected, I saw that a story of this school was one of being a community school. This meant all students living within the community, regardless of their many differences, could attend the school. Two other schools within this rural community were not community schools. Instead, they aligned with specific religious beliefs and church organizations. Only children whose families belonged to these churches, and lived according to their doctrines, were allowed to attend these schools. Stories of these schools were stories of segregation according to religious beliefs and practices.

School stories, according to Clandinin and Connelly (1996), are stories told by practitioners within the school and become shaped when policies and mandates intersect with the unfolding histories of school landscapes and those who live on them. A school story of my childhood school, given its mandate of being a community school, was that children or youth who could not participate in celebrations because of their religious beliefs, such as Christmas concerts and so on, were given alternative activities in spaces away from the celebrations.

Teacher stories are stories teachers tell of themselves where they make visible their teaching practices and their lives. A teacher story I saw Mr. Simpson living in relation with youth was one of playfulness, that is, of telling and playing jokes. Not only did he seem to appreciate playing jokes on youth, or involving youth in jokes played on other teachers, but he also seemed to enjoy when jokes were played on him. He often included written jokes throughout both unit and final exams, a practice I understood as his way of easing students' test writing anxieties.

Similar to stories of school, stories of teachers are stories told about a teacher both on and off of the school landscape. I imagine it was the stories I heard about Mr. Simpson's sense of humor and playfulness that caused me to want to be in one of his courses long before he became my teacher in Grade 9.

As I moved onto the professional knowledge landscape of Eastpark where Dean's and my lives intersected, my knowing of its professional knowledge landscape was limited. For the most part, my knowing came from stories shared by friends and colleagues who, either currently or in the past, were part of neighboring elementary and junior high schools. The stories they told about Eastpark were of collaborative planning that cut across both core curricula[5] and grade levels and of how, in the past, teachers had cycled with a particular group of youth through Grades 7, 8 and 9. Although this practice of cycling had stopped years earlier, remnants of this story still seemed to shape both teacher stories and school stories. My friends' and colleagues' tellings also included stories of Eastpark School being filled with families of diverse religious, ethnic, and economic backgrounds and that, at times, these differences caused tensions both within

[5] Core curricula, in this school as well as many other junior high contexts, refers to Math, Social, Language Arts and Science.

and outside the school. Stories of tension were also, often, connected to Eastpark being a district site for youth labeled as having "mild to moderate behavior problems." From friends and colleagues, I also heard stories about high teacher turnover but that, in more recent years, this turnover seemed to be stabilizing. Other, more recent stories included staffing changes with a new principal and new vice-principals arriving.

During the first few staff-only days of the school year, I paid close attention to policies and stories shared in staff meetings and to school stories and stories of school told by differing staff members. I did so as a way to become more familiar with the storied nature of the professional knowledge landscape of Eastpark school. From both formal and informal interactions among staff in these first few days of school, I learned that many of my colleagues at Eastpark were less than 8 years into their teaching careers; only 3 teachers, including myself, were joining the staff; complementary courses, such as Career & Technology Studies[6], Drama and Art were organized into tri-semesters while core courses as well as Physical Education, Band, and French courses stretched across the school year; class periods were 48-minutes; class sizes, in all subject matter areas, would be larger than in previous years and no differentiation would be made based on room sizes, expected learning outcomes, availability of equipment and resources, and so on; learning should be interactive; staff were expected to work together and with youth and families in ways that were respectful of diversity; teachers needed to be in on-going communication with families; classroom interactions and rules should reflect high

[6] Career & Technology Studies is comprised of 22 strands: Agriculture, Career Transitions, Community Health, Communication Technologies, Construction Technologies, Cosmetology Studies, Design Studies, Electro-Technologies, Energy & Mines, Enterprise & Innovation, Fabrication Studies, Financial Management, Food Studies, Forestry, Information Processing, Legal Studies, Logistics, Management & Marketing, Mechanics, Tourism Studies and Wildlife. Courses from Construction, Communication Technologies, Food Studies and Information Processing strands were offered at Eastpark School. I taught only courses from the Food Studies strand.

academic achievement and orderly student behavior; difficulties or differing perspectives between or among youth, families and teachers needed to be problem-solved prior to involving administrators; 2 minutes were time-tabled for youth to change classrooms as a way to decrease behavior problems in the hallways and to increase youths' accountability for being in class on time; all administrators and teachers would be on hallway supervision during class changes; a school-wide literacy program was being implemented to promote higher levels of reading and writing and, as well, to improve youths' results on provincial and district exams; the school focus, a focus expected to run across all subject matter and school activities, was to develop and deepen youths' critical thinking skills.

As these beginning days of the school year unfolded, with most of our time spent in whole and small group meetings, I felt many conversations focused on somewhat linear explorations of policies and school stories. We did not seem to stray very far away from discussing how youths' academic achievement might be improved or their behavior might be managed more effectively. As I listened to the talk around these policies and school stories, I wondered if the day to day life at Eastpark School could really unfold in such orderly and linear ways. My experiences on other school landscapes were that, regardless of how neatly and efficiently things appeared within the first few days, they became more complex and less certain as the school year unfolded. They became as Greene (1995) described, much messier:

> There are the bulletin boards crammed with notices and instructions, here and there interlaced with children's drawings or an outspoken poem. There are graffiti, paper cutouts, uniformed figures in the city schools; official voices

> blaring in and around; sudden shimmers when artists visit; circles of young people writing in journals and attending to stories. There are family groups telling one another what happened the night before, describing losses and disappearances, reaching for one another's hands. Clattering corridors are like the backstreets of ancient cities, filled with folks speaking multiple languages, holding their bodies distinctively, watching out for allies and for friends. There are shouts, greetings, threats, the thump of rap music, gold chains, flowered leotards, multicolored hair. Now and again there are the absorbed stares of youngsters at computer screens or the clink of glass and metal in school laboratories in front of wondering, puzzling eyes. There are textbooks with all their flaws, rows of desks, occasional round tables and paperbacks from which students can choose. (p. 10)

Could this school, I wondered, be so profoundly different that it, too, would not become filled with the complexities and realities of youths', families', and teachers' lives? What might adhering to such neat, orderly, and linear stories and policies throughout the school year mean to those living on the landscape of Eastpark School as they tried to negotiate stories of who they were and what mattered to them? If the crispness and well-starched school stories presented during the beginning days of the school year did stay intact throughout the unfolding of the school year, how might my teacher stories of trying to make central relationship-building between and among students and myself, and of sharing authority[7] (Oyler, 1996), fit within or lay alongside them.

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[7] Oyler (1996) used a dance metaphor as a way to show the delicate and ongoing negotiations teachers engage in as they attempt to share authority with students. She highlighted that teachers do not relinquish their teacher authority but, rather, work with students "to teach them the established dances, learn their new ones, and together with our mutual expertise create new dances the world has yet to see" (p. 137).

As I thought about how I might experience living within this context if it was a place where school stories and policies remained fixed, certain, and unchangeable, I recalled my master's work (Huber, 2000) and my explorations into the separation of self I felt as a teacher when school stories on former school landscapes were so narrow or rigid that my teacher stories could not fit. Thinking about the narratives of experiences I was bringing to Eastpark School, I wondered about the histories of the school stories and policies being portrayed during the first few days of the school year. Were these school stories remnants of former policies and people or had they emerged from new staff members, particularly the new administrators? Did they reflect stories lived by colleagues, youth, and families who were returning to the school? How had they shaped, and been shaped by, Eastpark community stories and stories of Eastpark community?

Reflecting further on how I experienced the beginning days of school at Eastpark, I realize that as I listened, observed, interacted, and wondered through both the planned and unplanned engagements, I was not only trying to figure out the school stories shaping this professional knowledge landscape but was also constructing stories of it. Quickly, I recall how I had observed, and wondered about, how it might make a difference that this staff, as a whole group, seemed more diverse than those I had worked with at former schools. Not only were differing ages and teaching experiences represented, but diverse ancestries, languages and religious beliefs were also readily visible. Awakening to how I constructed stories of both the professional knowledge landscape of Eastpark and of my new colleagues, and how my stories were interwoven with my experiences on other landscapes, led me to consider what stories my colleagues might have been constructing of me. As they watched, listened to, and interacted with me, had I fit smoothly into, or

rubbed up against, their stories of what it meant to be a Career & Technology Studies teacher, of how teachers who were new to a school landscape should behave, and so on? How, I wondered, do understandings I still carry of Eastpark, and colleagues I met there, link back to stories I constructed during my beginning days in the school.

Moving outward from the reconstructed story fragment between Dean and myself, and returning to how I experienced my beginning within the storied landscape of Eastpark School, caused me to think more about how Dean might have experienced his initial classes of Food Studies with me as his teacher. Similar to how the landscape of Eastpark and my colleagues were new to me, who I was and stories I lived by as a teacher were, perhaps, new to Dean. Thinking back to how I had spent my time trying to attend to, and wanting to learn, stories of the professional knowledge landscape of Eastpark and of colleagues, I wondered if Dean had entered into our Food Studies classroom with similar intentions. Had his attention, at times like mine, wandered away from classroom activities to thinking about what stories were being foregrounded and how they seemed similar to, or different from, stories he had formerly experienced in Food Studies as well as those he was experiencing in other classrooms at Eastpark? Had he, in ways similar to me, started from the outset to construct stories of who I was as a teacher and how the stories I was living by seemed to fit alongside other teachers' stories as well as school stories? If so, I wondered, had I fit easily into stories he had of teachers and of Eastpark or had he felt my teacher stories rubbing up against his stories? Had he felt continuities between his stories and those he saw me living, and perhaps being a part of, or did they seem so separated from his narratives of experience that he could not see himself or what mattered to him reflected within them? How, I wondered, had my response to Dean after

our fourth class together, that is, of him needing to "get better," fit within stories he had of himself both within and outside the school and with stories he might have been developing of me.

Awakening To Conflicting Social Narratives And Family Stories

Thinking about how my remembered moment between Mr. Simpson and me conflicted with stories I was learning to live within my family and in relation with others in our community, I found myself also wondering about stories Mr. Simpson might have been living and telling as our lives met in the Chemistry classroom, particularly during our lunchtime conversation. Was he aligning himself with a social narrative often told within this rural community of girls being expected to marry and become farm wives shortly after completing high school? Did he see and understand the important roles farm women, such as my mom, played as they worked alongside their families? That is, did Mr. Simpson see how women contributed not only to the economic success and growth of their family farms but, also, to the vitality of rural communities? Was Mr. Simpson attentive to the ways in which farm women composed lives of multiplicity (Bateson, 1994; Greene, 1994, 1995; Mullin, 1995), lives often textured by many conflicting stories and much physical labor? Or, given that prior to becoming a teacher and moving to our rural community, Mr. Simpson had only lived in a large urban context, was he arrogantly perceiving[8] (Lugones, 1987) those who made their living through farming? Might his response have come from knowing a story that within this community, girls who became pregnant before getting married were seen as having bad morals? Perhaps he knew my parents lived by stories of attending to the moral quality of their as well as my and my

[8] Drawing on the work of Frye (1983), Lugones (1987) explored "arrogant perception" as "the failure to identify with persons that one views arrogantly or has come to see as the products of arrogant perception" (p. 4).

siblings' lives. Maybe Mr. Simpson saw his response as a way of motivating or shaming me into living *good* student stories, that is, of working to my abilities, never disrupting class or asking too many questions, being compliant, and adhering to *proper* morals. Maybe he knew I had inherited a strong sense of determination from my mom, a story that motivated me when someone, particularly someone in a position of power over me (Alter, 1993), saw me as incapable? Possibly, Mr. Simpson knew I liked and respected him as a teacher and that his perceptions of me mattered and, as a result, that I would not want him to see me as lazy, intellectually incapable of passing Chemistry 20 or as living by deficit morals.

Reflecting further on stories attached to me by many of my elementary and secondary teachers, that is, of being academically average yet capable of more; at times having a negative attitude; that my talking and asking questions were often excessive and disruptive; and, being absorbed with relationships with peers; I recognize that having teachers story me in these ways was neither troubling nor important to me. My usual response to these stories, when my parents read my report cards or came home from Parent-Teacher Interviews, was disinterest unless my parents responded in such a way that I knew I had no choice but to change. Attending to my disinterest in shifting teachers' perceptions of me, showed me how I was not committed, for the most part, to helping them learn my multiplicity or to shift toward seeing me "big." It also highlighted for me that I was unmotivated, and I imagine did not understand how, to move away from seeing my teachers in correspondingly "small" ways. I realize it was not until I lived through this reconstructed memory fragment with Mr. Simpson that I experienced a deep sense of conflict or bumping up between and among stories I was living and those I was

learning to live in and outside of school. While Mr. Simpson was telling me to consider quitting Chemistry 20 because it was difficult, my parents were teaching me to live by stories of persistence and of asking for help when necessary.

Reconsidering the tensions I felt in the conversation with Mr. Simpson drew me to Heilbrun's (1999) and to Kennedy's (2001) explorations of liminal spaces. Kennedy, defining "limen," wrote it "means threshold" and that "liminal space means related to or situated at the limen. It is the space between what was and what is to be.... It creates both the time and space to play with possibilities not yet imagined" (p. 128). I wondered, was it within a liminal space, a space where my comfort was disrupted and I was pushed into a space of conflict between stories, that my multiple emotions and inability to respond to Mr. Simpson came forward. Did my inner tensions emerge as I faced myself (Anzuldúa, 1990; Nelson, 1995), an internal process where I was compelled to "acknowledge ... [my] rigidity and arrogant judgments, ... vulnerabilities ... [and] potential for being dismissive of [others]" (Nelson, 1995, p. 31)?

Traveling backward in place and time to my understandings of who I was as a youth, the stories I felt many teachers held of me, and how I experienced discontinuities among the dominant stories lived in my school and the stories I lived in my family and community contexts, awakened me to borders that, over time, seemed to become more rigid between teachers and me. These borders were, somewhat like Lugones (1987) described when she wrote about her shifting understanding of her relationship with her mother, borders of arrogance. She highlighted:

> To love my mother was not possible for me while I retained a sense that it was fine for me and others to see her arrogantly. Loving my mother also required that

> I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother's world, that I witness her own sense of herself from within her world. Only through this traveling to her "world" could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. (p. 8)

Troubling how I viewed my teachers, and felt perceived by them, in arrogant ways, I wondered why I had not felt more compelled to try to shift stories they told about me. What conditions might have helped me, and them, engage in the kinds of shifts Lugones saw as necessary to move from "arrogant" to "loving perception" as part of a process of traveling to each other's worlds?

Looking, again, at my response to Dean alongside my disinterest in working toward shifting stories many teachers had of me, and that I held of them, raised interesting questions for me as I thought about who I might have been in Dean's life and who I had wanted to be. How had Dean felt perceived by me? Had he understood my response as an arrogant perception of who he was and who he was becoming? Might he have seen my response as a judgment about his Filipino ancestry, gender, friends, learning needs, socio-economic and political background, or religious understandings? Could he, given that we were little more than strangers and situated on a landscape shaped by hierarchical plotlines where teachers were positioned as holding authority over students, risked trying to understand what was shaping my response? Given this broader landscape, could he have encouraged me to travel to his world?

Reconsidering emotions and tensions I felt in the moment I lived through with Mr. Simspon, I was struck by how, even though he had been a teacher in my life for three years prior to our lunchtime conversation, I did not name or verbally explore my feelings

with him either during the moment or at a later time. Still, I recalled with ease, the shifting stories I started to live in relation with Mr. Simpson and with the subject matter expectations of Chemistry 20. Seeing myself through Mr. Simpson's eyes, and being unwilling to live within stories he was suggesting, I started to live stories more similar to those I was learning to live by in my family. Passing Chemistry 20 and 30 and enrolling into a post-secondary education program became much more important to me. I began putting more effort into my homework and into studying for exams. I also started to work with a Chemistry tutor on a regular basis. Looking back, I wondered had Mr. Simpson also noticed these shifts. If so, how might he have understood my determination to keep at it or my determination against living out a story of quitting? Did he wonder why I never again asked him for help outside of our in-classroom time during the remainder of Chemistry 20 or throughout Chemistry 30?

Remembering these shifts in my student stories, I wondered how my response might have differed if the family stories I was learning or if the social narratives that surrounded me, had been otherwise. What might have happened, for example, if my parents were teachers? Recalling experiences of my classmates in Chemistry 20, I wondered, how they might have responded. In particular, I was drawn to think about girls whose parents did not seem to value their daughters finishing high school. How might youths have responded who were members in families that were just beginning to farm and who may have been experiencing more of a financial struggle thereby needing all family members' full-time help on the farm? How might my classmates, who I experienced as being marginally positioned on the school landscape (Delpit, 1995; Greene, 1993, 1994, 1995; hooks, 1996; McElroy-Johnson, 1993) because of their

differing learning needs, Aboriginal heritages or religious beliefs, have responded? Trying to travel to the worlds of these classmates, and trying to see school situated from within their stories, I thought about how the ways in which we experience school shapes, and is shaped by, family stories embedded within dominant social, institutional and cultural narratives. In this way, I began to think about how school experiences can shape, and be shaped by, narratives of experience embodied by teachers, children, youth and families.

Disrupting Familiar Stories: Research Puzzles Begin To Emerge

Reconsidering my beginnings on out-of-classroom places (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) at Eastpark School, and how quickly I constructed stories about this professional knowledge landscape and who my colleagues might be within it, helped me to see how I also constructed stories of how youth might have experienced their time in Food Studies during the previous school year or years. My construction of these stories began when I visited Eastpark School toward the end of the prior school year. During my visit, I discussed the particularities of the teaching position with the principal and a vice-principal, took a tour of the school, and spent a short time in the Food Studies lab. My intentions in arranging for this visit were to gain a sense of the school, facilities, and resources prior to beginning to sketch out possibilities for how I might begin to teach Food Studies within this particular context. Spending time in the Food Studies lab, I discovered much disarray and cleanliness that fell short of my standards. For example, as I opened cupboard door after cupboard door, and much of the contexts either tipped precariously outward or toppled out onto the floor, I knew I would need to spend much of

the summer cleaning and organizing the room. I could not imagine trying to teach in a space that felt as uncared for as this one did to me.

In August, when I returned to Eastpark School to begin organizing the room, I constructed more stories. Removing decaying food out of both the kitchens and storage areas, encountering what soon became to me an overwhelming number of dirty dishes, and recognizing that there was no sense of organization between or within the four kitchen areas, I began to wonder if the youth who I would be meeting, particularly those who had a history in this lab, and I would experience continuities between our stories of Food Studies. As the last days of the summer holiday drew to a close and I realized that I could not possibly finish cleaning and organizing the lab to reflect how I wanted it to be, I turned my attention away from the more hidden disarray and concentrated on the more readily visible appearance of the room. Unwilling to begin the school year with youth in a stark and bare classroom where it seemed like no one cared what the space looked or felt like, I tried to make it warm and welcoming. I tried to do this by: removing unnecessary furniture; moving in brightly painted book shelves; setting up displays; fixing broken furniture; creating wall spaces where students could display their future work and where they and I could share our personal artifacts and photographs; arranging furniture in ways I hoped would encourage conversation; hanging a "welcome" message across the door; and so on. Yet, even though I felt the outward appearance of the classroom had become more inviting and organized, I still remember wondering if this space would become one that made sense to me as a teacher and in which I felt comfortable. Not knowing for certain how the room had come to be in the state in which I found it, I imagined that stories of what had been previously acceptable in Food Studies would not likely match

with my stories. While I knew youth in Grade 7 would not carry these former stories because they were new to the school and to Food Studies, I imagined that for many of the youth in Grades 8 and 9, these former stories might be their only stories of Food Studies.

Recalling the uncertainty and tentativeness I felt as I met and started to work with youth in Grades 8 and 9, helped me to recognize how much of my attention, both in planning and during our in-classroom time, was focused on trying to disrupt what I imagined were former stories of Food Studies. I wanted stories of respect for each other, our learning environment and subject matter to be foregrounded. While trying to negotiate stories such as these might seem like something simple, I recall how it did not feel simple as I lived within this midst. At times, I felt overwhelmed and I saw myself falling into using power and control to pull youth over to *my ways.* At other times, I felt youth pushing stories onto me that felt chaotic or unsafe. Returning to the lunch hour moment between Dean and myself, I recognized how my telling Dean that he needed to "get better" and his response that he was trying to "be good" might have come from conflicts between his and my stories of teaching and learning, conflicts between his and my family stories embedded within cultural narratives and dominant stories of school.

Rethinking Moments Of Tension As Places Of Inquiry

Beginning this chapter with the lunchtime moment between Dean and myself, I recall the feelings I felt as I chose to begin my doctoral inquiry with this story. It was, and is, not a story I am proud of living or that I am particularly comfortable sharing with others. I knew it was a story that left me, and who I was as a teacher, vulnerable to being constructed by others in ways I did not want to be understood. I also knew I could begin my inquiry by telling many other stories, stories where, more than likely, I would be

perceived as a more thoughtful teacher. But, in the unfolding of this chapter, as I traveled backward, inward, and outward and thought hard about Dean's and my lives, I have come to rethink moments of tension and the educative promise these moments hold when we risk making ourselves vulnerable by inquiring into them.

Initially, as I began to write this chapter I wondered if, through my inquiry, I might learn how I could have avoided Dean's and my stories from bumping against each other. How could I learn from the differences and, possibly, the conflict between Dean's and my stories? How could I prevent myself from living other similar moments with youth I meet on school landscapes? This is, however, not what I have learned. Rather, I have come to see that trying to prevent, and to turn away from, moments of tension could also mean living in ways that avoid the possibilities that can emerge in Buber's (1947) metaphor of a "narrow rocky ridge" (p. 218). Paying attention to communities that have contrasting and opposing perspectives, Buber saw the ridge as the "third alternative" (p. 240)—as a place of tension where those with opposite viewpoints or positionings meet and engage in "real conversation" (p. 240). He wrote:

> I did not rest on the broad upland of a system that includes a series of sure statements about the absolute, but on a narrow rocky ridge between the gulfs where there is no sureness of expressible knowledge but the certainty of meeting. (p. 218)

As I read Buber's understandings of the narrow rocky ridge, I began to understand that trying to avoid the bumping up of stories, and therefore of lives, would necessarily mean remaining confined by, and locked within, borders of arrogance. Through my inquiry in this chapter, I have come to see that the tensions I experienced, as my stories bumped

against others' stories or with school stories, emerged as I felt my borders pushed and I became "dis-positioned." Like Vinz (1997), I, too, now see being dis-positioned as a place of possibility from which we can engage in learning to "un-know" and "not-know."

> I think of *un-knowing*, giving up present understandings *(positions)* … to make gaps and spaces through which to (re)member ourselves as we examine the principles behind our practices, as a way to articulate our theories in practice, or transform pedagogical principles and purposes into new beginnings…. *Not-knowing* is easier and harder. To *not-know* is to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty…. [It] is to admit vulnerability. (p. 139)

I realize it was from a place of being willing to examine my stories to live by and to admit my vulnerabilities that I could begin to engage in a process of trying to travel to Dean's world—to try to think about his stories to live by, to inquire into how stories we were each living by might have been shaped by differing family and cultural landscapes and by the particularities of the landscape of Eastpark School where our lives were meeting.

A Research Puzzle Emerges

It was from this place, then, of wanting to travel to the worlds of youth and families and to inquire into how their stories might be shaped by family and school stories embedded within cultural narratives that my research puzzle emerged. The puzzle I knew I wanted to more deeply understand was: What might I learn by inquiring into experiences where youths' and families' stories to live by intersect, and bump against, school stories? How might inquiring into continuities and discontinuities youth and families experience in schools deepen my understandings of cultural, institutional and

social narratives shaping family and school stories? How might our inquiry expand knowledge about the meeting of diverse lives on school landscapes?

In the following chapters I take up this research puzzle as I explore my moving onto River's Edge School landscape and engaging in narrative inquiry with research participants: Muskaan, Rishi, Geeta, Tessa, Anne, Abby and Jake. I realized in order to answer my research puzzle I needed to not only engage in research conversations with youth about their school experiences but to also engage in research conversations with their parents both about their school experiences as well as about their children's experiences in school. In was in this way, then, that when I invited Abby into this narrative inquiry I also invited her dad, Jake[9]; when I invited Muskaan I also invited her parents, Rishi and Geeta; and, when I invited Tessa I also invited her mom, Anne.

[9] At the time of my research Abby lived fulltime with her dad and, therefore, I had research conversations only with Abby and Jake and not Abby's mom, Suzie. Tessa did live with both her parents, Anne and John. But, due to John's very busy work schedule, he chose to not become a participant in this narrative inquiry.

Chapter Two: Situating The Inquiry

Imagining the unfolding of my narrative inquiry, I felt pulled by my history as a secondary teacher to want to learn from the experiences of youth living on and negotiating the landscape of a secondary school context. I also wanted to learn from the experiences of the parents of youth. While I knew the commonplace structure of secondary schools in which youth moved from classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher could present some potential complexities in that not all of the teachers might consent to my presence alongside them and youth, I still longed for the possibility to live out my narrative inquiry on a landscape with which I was familiar. However, while I sensed a comfortableness in the rhythms of a junior or senior high school and, as well, in negotiating relationships with youth in this age range, the choosing of possible school sites was not my decision to be made alone. Rather, because my doctorial study was being undertaken within the context of Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly's SSHRC study: *Intersecting narratives: Cultural harmonies and tensions in Canadian schools*[10], this decision needed to be made in collaboration with others on the Alberta research team[11].

Negotiating Entry Into River's Edge

Knowing "relationship is key to what it is that narrative inquirers do" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189) led our research team into conversations about relationships we shared with principals and teachers, relationships which, perhaps, we could build upon in the unfolding of our narrative inquiries. We knew that our research held potential

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[10] I wish to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for supporting my doctoral study.

[11] Michael Connelly and a group of doctoral students undertook a related study in Ontario.

for uncovering or making visible tension-filled moments where school stories bumped up against youths' and families' lives and, because of this potential, we knew we needed to work with a principal and teachers who would not shut down but, rather, who would take up conversations with us around these tensions. As we discussed possible school sites where, and participants with whom, we could take up our research puzzles, I also named my desire for engaging in inquiry in a junior or senior high school. With relationships in our foreground, as well as my desire to live out my narrative inquiry in a secondary school context, we approached Duncan MacRae, the principal at River's Edge junior high school. Both Jean and I had relationships with Duncan. I also had a relationship with Lily, a former teaching colleague whom I trusted and respected, and who was on staff at River's Edge. I hoped Lily would consider becoming the teacher participant in my inquiry and, if not, that she would support my relationship-making with other teachers.

In mid-October 2003, our research team met with Duncan to explain and discuss our proposed research[12]. Following this meeting, Duncan wrote a letter to the school district superintendent which supported us to engage in our narrative inquiries at River's Edge. In response to Duncan's letter, we were granted school district permission to take up our research at the school.

With school district approval in place, Duncan invited our research team to attend a regularly scheduled staff meeting. During this meeting, we explored our proposed research and, in doing so, explained that our hopes were to begin by spending time in the classrooms of teachers who signed up to be teacher participants in our narrative inquiries. We explained that as we lived in the classrooms alongside teacher participants and youth

[12] Prior to this meeting, we completed the required ethics approval process for the larger SSHRC study and obtained approval through the Cooperative Activities program.

we imagined participating in whatever ways seemed to make sense to the teacher and youth, the rhythms of the classroom, and our experiential backgrounds. We talked about how, in the midst of this participation, we imagined observing interactions between and among youth, with the teacher, with us, with subject matter and with school stories. We explained that we would write field notes of our participation, that is, that we would write "ongoing, daily notes, full of the details and moments" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 104) of our experiences in the classroom and in the school. In addition, we hoped to engage in monthly research conversations with teacher participants. As we participated in classrooms alongside youth we imagined that relationships would develop between each of us and particular youth. Each doctoral student involved in the study imagined inviting three youth and their parents into research conversations. As our presentation in the staff meeting drew to a close, we invited teachers to think about becoming participants in our narrative inquiries. Later, as I reflected on and wrote about my participation in the staff meeting, I ended my field note with the following questions:

> What if too many teachers volunteer to participate in our study? How will we choose between them given that we do not know them? What sense would teachers make of being chosen? What sense would they make of not being chosen? How would I, as a teacher, experience a researcher choosing or not choosing me as a teacher participant? (field note, October 23 2003)

Realizing Complexities Of Negotiating Entry

Shortly after this staff meeting, our research team was invited to meet, and talk further about our proposed research, with Norma and Linda, two teachers at River's Edge. To provide a sense of our conversation, I composed the following word image

from the field note I wrote that evening. The teachers' words are italicized while those of our research team are in regular font.

What's your research about?
What's your purpose?

Moving backward in time and place
Jean provides history, context
Narrative inquiry at City Heights[13]
With Janice Huber and Karen Keats Whelan
Wanted to understand the bumping up of children's lives
with teachers' lives and stories of school
Wanted to understand the bumping up of teachers' lives
with school stories and stories of school
Questions emerged around children's, parents', grandparents' understandings of school

Research at River's Edge
Picks up on these questions
Want to understand the meeting and bumping up of family, cultural and school
landscapes

My teaching practices
Embedded in my experiences, in who I am as a teacher
Can you talk about how you see your research unfolding in the classroom?
How will you introduce yourselves to students?
They will wonder about your presence

Imagine beginning by spending two mornings, afternoons or full days per week
In teacher participant's classroom
Working with teacher
Supporting, participating, however possible
Talking with youth about our research
Our lives
Not observing, sitting off to side writing notes
Field notes written after in-classroom time
Time in classroom to focus on getting to know youth
Meeting youth who might be interested in becoming participants

When youth have chosen to participate
Want to travel from class to class with them
Of course, depends on teacher permission
Imagine getting deeper sense of how youth experience school

[13] The year-long narrative inquiry at City Heights school was undertaken alongside a teacher, children and families in a Year 3/4 multi-age classroom.

Also, engage in research conversations with youth participants
Outside of classroom time
And with their parents
Telling family stories, cultural stories, school experiences

Meet with teacher participant
Hoping for one research conversation per month
Telling teacher stories, family stories, cultural stories, school experiences
For example,
How are teachers', youths', parents' lives shaping, and being shaped by, River's Edge current ranking as number one among district junior high schools on provincial achievement tests?
How might these stories shape youths' and families' lives who have newly immigrated to Canada and do not speak English?
What tensions are teachers experiencing in the meeting of these youths' lives and school and district expectations for continued success on provincial achievement exams?

Are you coming to the classroom to see how the teacher works with ESL students?
Which strategies the teacher is using?

Not coming to look for answers
Not expecting to see figured out strategies
Don't have it all figured out in our teaching either
Not about evaluation
Rather a space to build relationships
Getting to know each other
Learning to trust each other
Learning about teacher's, youths' and families' experiences in school
Learning about school stories

Not sure I know all the school stories
Maybe you need teachers who have been at River's Edge longer

I'm concerned about time
Already feeling stretched across commitments
(Interim research text based on field note, October 27 2003)

Responding to Linda's and Norma's wonders about the purposes of our research, Jean situated the research puzzles we hoped to explore at River's Edge as emerging from an earlier narrative inquiry that she, Karen and Janice collaboratively engaged in City Heights School. In doing so, Jean showed our research puzzles not only came forward from each research team member's professional and personal histories but, also, grew

from Jean and Michaël Connelly's ongoing program of research, a program of research stretching back to the 1980s. Picking up on this, Norma and Linda highlighted how their practices as teachers were interwoven with, and could not be separated from, their experiences, their stories to live by. In this way, what became visible was, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explored, we were entering into this conversation, and each other's lives, in the midst of stories.

> As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of living their stories. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave. Their lives continue. Furthermore, the places in which they live and work, their classrooms, their schools, and their communities, are also in the midst when we researchers arrive. Their institutions and their communities, their landscapes in the broadest sense, are also in the midst of stories. (pp. 63-64)

Our entering in the midst of stories also became visible as I attempted to provide possible examples of what we meant by school stories. Not knowing many stories of River's Edge School I drew on previous conversations between Lily and myself. In this way, then, I named two stories, that is, that River's Edge was currently ranked number one among district junior high schools on provincial achievement tests and, as well, that there were growing numbers of youth at the school who were learning English as Second Language.

Reflecting on this conversation, some time after negotiating entry onto the landscape of River's Edge, I realize how significant this being in the midst of stories is. Thinking further about my field note of this conversation I realize that another school story I could have shared, but did not, was that Duncan, who had only been assigned

principal of River's Edge School during the previous spring, was the fourth principal at the school in the past four years. I now wonder how Duncan's newness to the school might have been shaping our conversation. Had it mattered that we were meeting in Duncan's office and that he was present during our conversation? I realize that while Jean and I shared a history with Duncan, given his newness to the school, Linda, Norma and Duncan were just beginning to know one another. While Jean and I, because of long histories of relationships, felt at ease with Duncan, it is quite possible that Norma and Linda did not share a similar sense of ease. I also wonder how Linda's and Norma's realizations that both Jean and I shared relationships with Duncan might have increased vulnerabilities they were feeling? When Linda and Norma asked if we would come to classrooms "to see how the teacher works with ESL students" and "which strategies the teacher is using," might they have been trying to name their concerns that we would be evaluating their competencies as teachers and, perhaps even more so, that we would be reporting on them to Duncan, their new principal? Looking back now as I think about the ways each of us were in the midst of stories, I am not surprised that neither Linda nor Norma chose to become teacher participants in our narrative inquiries.

In fact, as weeks continued to unfold following our conversation with Norma and Linda, no teachers offered to, or expressed interest in, becoming teacher participants. That was until Mr. Ros, a teacher who knew Jean, volunteered that we could participate in Drama classes he was teaching. In his negotiations with us, Mr. Ros agreed to sign a letter of consent and, as well, to engage in informal, non audio-recorded conversations, but he made clear he was not interested in participating in monthly research conversations. Reconsidering Mr. Ros' decision to not engage in ongoing research

conversations, I wonder if, like Linda and Norma he, too, felt "stretched across commitments" or might have possibly been leery of Jean's and my relationships with Duncan.

As I return to these early negotiations now, I am called to think again about the increasing complexity of the professional knowledge landscape of schools. Because I, too, was teaching on a part-time basis in a school in Alberta while I was in the midst of my narrative inquiry, I carry strong memories of my own growing tensions as a teacher. These tensions, not unlike Linda's and Norma's possible tensions, were also shaped by feeling thinly stretched across many commitments. My tensions were also shaped by living in the midst of the bumping of many stories—the stories I lived by as teacher and the school stories and stories of school shaping my context. As a teacher also on a professional knowledge landscape at that time, I am not certain I would have felt comfortable with researchers who had relationships with the principal with whom I was working but not yet with me, entering into my classroom. Given the increased focus on accountability for teachers through standardized achievement testing and the ongoing maintenance of a hierarchical structure in schools and school districts, these were, and in many ways I feel continue to be, times in which teachers are feeling vulnerable and uncertain about their futures[14]. Attending to the multiple complexities that are shaped by being in the midst of stories is something I will be much more wakeful to as I continue to live as a narrative inquirer.

[14] In Chapter Seven I have included current statistics showing the numbers of early teacher leaving in Alberta. Although further study would need to be undertaken to hear the stories these teachers tell about their early leaving, I would not be surprised to learn that tensions with the current professional knowledge landscape of schools figure large.

Attending To The Meeting Of Lives In The Drama Classroom

I was excited when Mr. Ros, a senior teacher who was also new to River's Edge in September 2003, offered us a homeplace in the Drama classroom. We negotiated spending two afternoons per week which meant we would spend the first half of each afternoon in a Grade 9 Drama course stretching from the end of January to mid-June and the second half of the afternoon in multiple six-week Grade 7 Drama courses. The Grade 7 course we initially entered into was approximately half over and, during the remainder of the school year, I participated in three additional six-week Grade 7 Drama courses. Although Mr. Ros also taught Grade 8 Drama courses, I was drawn to entering into research relationships with youth in Grades 7 and 9, and their families, because of how I saw youth in these grades positioned within the school. I saw youth in Grade 7 as still relatively new to the landscape of River's Edge and to the school stories being lived there, while youth in Grade 9, although more familiar with the school, would also be living through processes of leaving River's Edge and moving onto high school landscapes. I imagined as I listened to and inquired into stories told by youth in these transitional, tentative, and uncertain positionings, as well as to the stories their parents' told, that I would learn much about family stories and cultural narratives intersecting, and bumping against, school stories.

Entering into the Drama classrooms I felt comfortable engaging in a narrative inquiry and was excited to learn through this process. Still, I wondered what it might mean to negotiate and live a story of researcher in another's teacher classroom. I also wondered what it would be like to live on a school landscape where I was not also positioned as a teacher. To provide a sense of my wonderings, I pulled the following

questions from field notes I wrote during my beginning at River's Edge, both before and after being invited into the Drama classroom.

> Will I be able to see big and see small as I come to know youth in a classroom setting being shaped not only by the meeting of youths', a teacher's, and my lives but, as well, by school stories and stories of school? Will I be able to adequately capture this meeting of one another's lives, subject matter and milieu in my field notes? What will meeting youths' parents, also potential research participants, look and feel like given that as a researcher I will no longer be meeting parents in the usual ways in which I have come to know them as a teacher—through Meet The Teacher evenings and Parent-Teacher Interviews? How are teachers, other than Mr. Ros, feeling about my presence at River's Edge? Are they wondering (or perhaps worrying) about what stories I am learning and will tell of life at River's Edge? (Interim research text based on field notes, fall 2003)

While I had no experience teaching Drama or with formal script writing or acting, I imagined the subject matter of Drama would be conducive to much small and whole group student interaction and less direct teacher instruction. I also imagined building relationships with youth in the Drama classrooms would be similar to, yet also different from, what I had experienced as a Career & Technology Studies teacher. I drew courage from my knowing that one of my strengths as a teacher was negotiating relationships with youth as this story, over my years of teaching, had been given back to me many times by current and former students, families and colleagues. This was not to imply that I thought negotiating relationships with youth was easy, static, tension-less, or one-sided but,

rather, that I believed I knew something, based on my teaching experiences, about relationship-building with youth and their families.

Entering into the Drama classrooms, I also did not want one of the first stories I told students about myself was that I was a teacher. Quite consciously, then, I did not include this telling of who I was when I introduced myself to youth as shown in the following field note.

> I explained I was a student from the University of Alberta and would be spending time at River's Edge for the remainder of the school year doing research into youth's experiences both in and outside of school. I said I would be spending time in the Drama classroom and in many out-of-classroom places, such as the library and the lunchroom, as a way to learn about River's Edge School and to have opportunities to get to know them in different places. I said I would talk further about my research but, for now, I just wanted to get to know them and to have them think about whether or not they'd like to become involved in my research. I explained participating in my research meant that they, their parents and, perhaps, even their grandparents would engage in conversations with me about their experiences in school. I did not include anything about my teaching history even though this is a telling of myself that I normally included in my first day introductions when I begin teaching at a new school or working with a new group of students. It felt strange to omit this part of who I am. (field note, January 27 2004)

I made the decision to not include a telling of myself as a teacher when first meeting youth at River's Edge because I did not want them to place me into stories they already

carried of teachers, stories where I felt at risk of being pre-defined. I was concerned that if youth named me in this way from the outset of our lives meeting, it could shut down or alter possibilities. For example, youth who did not like or trust teachers might not consider becoming research participants, youth who lived by stories of wanting to please teachers might feel obligated to participate[15], and so on. Rather than get placed into, and stuck within, the boundaries of youths' possible stories of teachers, I hoped youth would come to know my multiplicity, that is, that while I was a teacher I was also a daughter, traveler, sister, aunt, student and so on. I imagined sharing stories of who I was and who I was becoming as a teacher amidst stories about growing up on a farm; my Dad teaching me to fish and to love boating and camping; how my Mom's abilities to design and sew clothing had become one of my passions; how I learned best through talking and asking questions; my struggles as a child and youth in school when definitions of what it meant to be a *good* student were singular and narrow; how traveling within, and outside of, Canada was awakening me to at least some of my cultural understandings and taken-for-grantedness (Greene, 1995); and so on. In similar ways to imagining sharing stories of who I was and who I was becoming, I hoped youth would also share with me stories of their multiplicity regardless of whether or not they eventually became research participants.

However, as I began living out afternoons in the Drama classrooms, my former sense of confidence in knowing how to negotiate relationships with youth withered. Often in my field notes I wrote about how difficult it felt to talk with them, both in terms

[15] Exploring ethical dilemmas faced by researchers in the midst of negotiating relational inquiries, Josselson (2007) highlighted that researchers need to "be alert to signs of subtle coercion (even if the participant endorses his/her willingness to participate).... As a matter of good research practice, as well as ethics, researchers must always be thinking about what motives lead a person to participate" (p. 541).

of discussing their in-classroom work as well as engaging in more broadly focused conversations. While I could have drawn from many of the field notes I initially wrote, I chose the following two as a way to provide a sense of my beginning experiences alongside youth in the Drama classrooms.

> When youth in the Grade 9 class began working on writing and practicing their scripts I moved to sit alongside two girls. It was really hard to get them to talk with me. They just seemed more interested in writing their script. They weren't rude but it felt like they didn't want to talk with me about anything, including the script they were working on. At times, they didn't even respond to my questions about their script. (field note, February 4 2004)

> Toward the end of the Grade 7 class, Mr. Ros asked youth to write in their journals and reflect on learning tasks they had worked on during class. While youth wrote in their journals, I reflected on my experiences during class and jotted down reminder notes to myself about how hard it had felt to join into the differing groups. The notes I jotted down included: youth seemed just straight up focused on their work; I experienced them as not wanting or open to suggestions from me as an outsider; I felt like I was on the periphery of every group I tried to join; and, I felt lonely being among them. (field note, February 15 2004)

In addition to exploring in my field notes how youth in the Drama classrooms seemed to respond differently to my presence among them and to my attempts to engage in conversation with them, the following field note highlighted how, at times and with some youth, I sensed feelings of being nervous when I tried to interact with them.

> I didn't talk with Josh today. Last class, we started a conversation about our school and family experiences and I hoped to be able to pick up on this conversation again today. But, I have noticed in the past two classes (the first two classes of the Grade 9 Drama course) that Josh sat and worked alone while all the other youth sat, and worked, with friends. Josh's stories are fascinating but I don't want my talking with him to possibly isolate him even further. Today he just seemed nervous and quickly looked away whenever we made eye contact with each other. Perhaps he, too, is concerned how others in the classroom might perceive our interactions. (field note, January 29 2004)

Laying my field notes, metaphorically, side by side and attending to their interconnections raised wonders for me around how I might have unknowingly shaped youths' responses to my presence in the Drama classrooms by my intentionally deciding not to name myself as I teacher when I first introduced myself and as I began engaging in informal one-on-one conversations with them. What sense, I wondered, had youth made of my saying that I was at River's Edge doing research? Might they have understood that my role as a researcher was to observe their behavior and interactions or, perhaps, to focus on their success with Drama subject matter? Did they wonder if I was going to report my observations or stories that they told me to others, particularly to Mr. Ros? Might they, as they listened to me saying that participating in my research meant that I would also be talking with their parents and possibly their grandparents, have interpreted that what I was saying was that I was going to tell their parents or grandparents about what they did and how they behaved in school?

As a teacher, building relationships with youth was not separated from our engaging together in Career & Technology Studies subject matter. Thinking again about my decision to not name myself as a teacher, I realize how in the moment of introducing myself there had been a threshold to a liminal space (Heilbrun, 1999; Kennedy, 2001), that is, a space in which possibilities could emerge that I had not yet imagined. However, I realize that, initially, I was unwilling to enter into this space as I was stuck within the boundaries of my own stories, that is, if I shared that I was a teacher it might shut down or alter possibilities with youth. I recognize that while I was imagining possibilities between youth and myself where we would come to know stories of each other's lives, I was, at the same time, refusing to enter into the uncertainty of the liminal space between us and to engage with the possibilities which, together, we could have co-composed. Perhaps, I realize, if I had explored my teaching history, youth might have felt able to interact with me in ways more familiar to me as a teacher as they would have been able to place me into a role they understood within a school context.

There was, however, one girl, Abby, who, from the outset of my spending time in the Grade 9 Drama classroom, seemed to respond differently to me and to my presence.

Coming To Know Abby

Abby and I met during our second Drama class together. Mr. Ros had just assigned students the next learning task, that is, that for the next class each youth needed to repeat, from memory and five times in a row, a short tongue twister. Joining Abby and Kristy, who were sitting side by side and close to me, I realized they were not rehearsing tongue twisters but, instead, were practicing the pronunciation of various Spanish words. When I asked what they were doing, Abby explained they were studying for a Spanish

exam which lead us into the conversation made visible in the following word image.

Included in this word image are also my perceptions of Abby on that day.

Second year learning Spanish
Loves it
I ask
Where does interest in learning Spanish come from?
She says
Not sure
Others often think she is of Spanish ancestry
She is not
Interest might be connected to family vacations in Mexico
Loves to travel
Feels it is important to know local language when traveling

Dark hair
Shoulder length
Streaked blonde
Olive skin
Brown eyes
Wears make-up
Dresses hip
Big smile
Smiles a lot

She loves Drama
Acted in *Who Has Seen The Wind* at Prairie Theatre[xx]
Also a singer

Would like to audition for *Canadian Idol*[xxi]
But, needs to be 16 years old
Not old enough

Wants to go to Princess Anne for high school
Because of acting and singing classes offered there
Mom wanted her to go there for junior high
Went to the school for a visit at the end of Grade 6
Lesbians in the hallways
Didn't want to go back
Instead, decided to come to River's Edge

[xx] Prairie Theatre is a community, not-for-profit theatre. In addition to putting on major play productions, it also offers theatre classes, workshops and camps for children, teens and adults.

[xxi] *Canadian Idol* is a televised national competition where competitors are judged on their "singing ability, style, presence and … potential to be a Canadian Idol." Competitors must be "Canadian citizens (or Landed Immigrants) aged between 16 and 28." (Information retrieved August 6, 2005 @ http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1106002519025_10)

Now, shocked by earlier response to Princess Anne School
Doesn't know why she responded that way
Now, thinking differently
Schools should be places where people can be whoever they are
Wants to go to a high school where differences are okay
Where everyone can be real
Not having to pretend

Will go to Princess Anne's Open House[18]
To learn, to see
Will attend spring performances at Princess Anne
A way to possibly meet students already attending the school
Hear more real stories from students
What the school is really like

Seems
Comfortable
Friendly
Confident
Open
Fun
Easy to talk with
(Interim research text based on field note, January 29 2004)

Composing the above word image, I reflected on how my initial interpretations of Abby as "friendly," "open and easy to talk with," "confident" and "comfortable" remained with me, and were threaded throughout my field notes, as her and my lives met in the Drama classroom from the end of January to mid-June. Noting my interpretations of Abby, I wondered if I would have experienced her in the same ways had I met her in another classroom context. How might her passions for, and competencies with, acting and singing have shaped our initial and ongoing interactions? Might the confidence, comfort and openness I sensed in her have been different if we had met in the midst of other subject matter, particularly in an area of study where she felt less certain about her abilities to excel? Would she have so willingly shared shifting stories of who she was and

[18] According to the school district website, schools host an Open House as a way to attract potential students and families to the school for the upcoming school year.

who she was becoming, such as the one she told of not wanting to go to Princess Anne after her visit in Grade 6 but, now 3 years later, that she was shocked by her earlier response and was seeking a school where "people can be whoever they are" and "differences are okay"?

Over the weeks following Abby's and my initial conversation, Abby regularly acknowledged me by saying "Hi," "How are you doing?" or "Are you learning anything?" whenever she or I arrived in the Drama classroom. Abby and Kristy began every class sitting side by side and, for the most part, worked together learning the Drama subject matter. Often I joined them as they worked. During our time together, I learned Abby liked being a student at River's Edge School both in terms of what and how she was learning. She also enjoyed being at River's Edge because she could spend time with her friends. She frequently talked about how she loved the acting course she was enrolled in at Prairie Theatre and how she experienced it as a space "where she could just be" (field note, February 11 2004). Alongside Abby's stories, I shared stories about my experiences as a teacher and the junior high school where I was working. I also told stories of my life as a graduate student and the work I was engaged in as a research assistant.

It was, then, from the "relational space[19]" (Huber, 2000; Whelan, 2000) that seemed to be emerging between Abby and I in the Drama classroom and, as well, my desires to know more about a girl in Grade 9 who was seeking school spaces "where differences are okay, where everyone can be real, not having to pretend," that I invited

[19] Huber (2000) and Whelan (2000) in their collaboratively written doctoral dissertations explored "relational spaces" as spaces that are "fluid, relational, and ever-embracing of the multiple stories that shape our lives," where "our~selves" flow into each other but do not require "a giving up of self in order to meet the other" (p. 89).

Abby, and her dad, Jake, to become participants in my narrative inquiry. In addition to field notes I wrote about the time Abby and I spent together in the Grade 9 Drama classroom (January – June 2004), my field texts also included six audio-recorded and transcribed research conversations with Abby and two audio-recorded and transcribed research conversations with Jake. During the time Abby and I and Jake and I were engaged in research conversations, Abby completed Grade 9 at Rivers' Edge and moved, first, to Princess Anne and, then, part way through Grade 10 to St. Peters. More of Abby's, as well as Jake's, stories are told in Chapter Four, *Composing A Life ... Becoming An Actress ... And So Much More*.

Coming To Know Muskaan

The Grade 9 Drama course was approximately half over when Muskaan joined the class. The following word image was created from field notes I wrote across Muskaan's and my time together in the Drama classroom.

[First day]
Arrives to the Drama classroom during lunch hour
Smiles at Mr. Ros and me
Says she has just moved to Canada
From Kenya
Mr Ros briefly describes Drama course
And learning task youth are currently working on
Muskaan briefly describes Drama course she was taking in Kenya
I explain I am at River's Edge doing research

Fashionably dressed
Black hair
Long, thick braid
Southeast Asian ancestry
Big, brown eyes
Slender

Class begins
Students move into previously chosen groups
Picking up with in-progress learning task

Muskaan sits alone
Not invited to join a group

Seems
Shy
Quiet
Friendly
Focused

[As the term unfolds …]
Sits alone
Works alone
Smiles when smiled at
Talks when spoken to
Tells me she would prefer to work with classmates
But, they have already made their friends

Seems
Mature
Independent
Studious
Polite

Shares bits and pieces about her life in Kenya
Similarities/differences between Kenya and Alberta
Is learning her way around River's Edge
Is doing well in her courses
Not enjoying life at River's Edge
Misses Kenya, her friends
She's lonely

Attended private Kenyan system school
Then, private British system school
In Kenya
Teachers' expectations are higher
Drama subject matter is more academic
Student behaviour much better
At River's Edge
Students so into their friends, not very friendly
School and teachers expectations feel different, lower
Student behaviour much poorer
(Interim research text based on field notes, April 5 - June 15 2004)

Muskaan and I often spent time together during Drama class. I imagine this was, at least in part, because she worked alone on each of the assigned learning tasks. While

youth in Grade 9 Drama were required to complete a few of the learning tasks individually, for the most part, they were able to choose to complete the learning tasks alone or with one or two partners. Whenever youth chose to work together, I never saw Mr. Ros live out a story of assigning partners. While I found it difficult to watch Muskaan work alone, particularly once I knew that she would have preferred to work with others and that she was experiencing her life at River's Edge as lonely, I did not feel I had authority to shift the stories Mr. Ros lived by as a teacher alongside youth in the Drama classroom[20]. It was, then, because I never saw Muskaan try to initiate conversation with other youth in the classroom that I began to interpret her as shy and quiet but also as mature and independent. However, whenever youth or Mr. Ros smiled or spoke to Muskaan she always responded by either smiling or speaking back. In this way, then, I saw Muskaan as friendly and polite.

While I was uncomfortable with Muskaan always working alone, her doing so seemed to open a space in which we could begin to tell each other stories of our lives. As Muskaan shared story fragments of her life in Kenya I learned that she lived, first, in a small town in rural Kenya. Living in this community, she attended a private Kenyan system school before moving, with her mom, dad, and younger brother, to Nairobi where she changed to a British system private school (field note, April 27 2004). Over time, I

[20] I still do not feel it was my place to judge, and through this judgment, to work to change the situation where Mr. Ros did not move Muskaan into a group. I have no knowing of Mr. Ros' thinking about this situation because I never discussed it with him. This is, however, a lingering tension for me. I could have asked Muskaan if she wanted me to share with Mr. Ros that her preference would have been to work with other youth rather than alone. But I did not. During the time I spent in the classroom I struggled with feeling very uncertain. By asking Muskaan this question, would her opinion of me shift? Would she continue to trust me? I also felt I could not talk about this with Mr. Ros without Muskaan's permission to do so. If I moved ahead and talked with Mr. Ros without Muskaan's permission, might Ms. Ros have felt I was evaluating his practice, something we had promised not to do? As I revisit these tensions today, I realize in new ways both the complex as well as relational nature of inquiries undertaken alongside youth and teachers in classrooms.

also learned that Muskaan experienced teacher and school expectations as "lower" and student behaviour as "poorer" at River's Edge than what she had experienced while attending school in Kenya. From Muskaan's told stories as well as watching her engagement with the Drama learning tasks, I came to see her as "focused," "studious" and "independent."

It was, then, from the relational space that seemed to be emerging between Muskaan and I in the Drama classroom and, as well, my desires to know more about the unfolding life experiences of a girl who had recently immigrated from Kenya and was learning to negotiate life in Canada that I invited Muskaan as well as her parents, Geeta and Rishi, to become participants in my narrative inquiry. In addition to field notes I wrote about the time Muskaan and I spent together in the Grade 9 Drama classroom from April to June 2004, my field texts also included seven audio-recorded and transcribed research conversations with Muskaan and two audio-recorded and transcribed research conversation with Rishi and Geeta. Following Muskaan's completion of Grade 9 at Rivers' Edge in June 2004, her family moved to another Alberta city. To continue our research conversations, I either drove to the other Alberta city or we met when Muskaan returned for weekend visits to the city in which we had met. During my visits to Muskaan's home in the second Alberta city, Muskaan and I met in one-on-one research conversations as well as in group research conversations with Rishi and Geeta. More of Muskaan's, as well as Geeta's and Rishi's, stories are told in Chapter Three, *Curriculum Making In The Meeting Of Muskaan's Life And Stories Of School.*

Coming To Know Tessa

Tessa's and my lives intersected during the third six-week Grade 7 Drama course I participated in during my time at River's Edge. Similar to the word image I composed about coming to know Muskaan, the following word image was also created from field notes I wrote across Tessa's and my time together in the Drama classroom.

[First days of Drama 7]
Learning task:
Write, rehearse, act three scenes

Find partner
Same size
Same gender
Same length, colour hair
One is the actress/actor
Other is the reflection, mirror

Students spread around room
Classroom fills with talk
Negotiating, writing scripts

Next step
Rehearse
Students spread further around classroom
Into hallway
Hum of blending voices
Laughter

Time to act
Volunteers?
Silence
Tessa and partner volunteer
Seems out-going
Seems to like having fun
Acting scenes
Funny
Well written
Well practiced
Well done

Ponytail
Jeans and a T-shirt

Eurocanadian ancestry
No make-up
Seems to have "energy to burn"
Talks a lot
Laughs a lot

[A few classes later]
Learning task:
Work in groups
Use bodies to make machines
Audience must guess

Suggests
Explains
Shows
Draws classmates back on-task
Laughs a lot
Seems to be a leader in groups, in class

[Recurring threads across classes]
Interacts beyond close friends
Smiles a lot
Tells Mr. Ros stories
Seems friendly
Talks fast
Talks a lot
Friends want to sit close beside
Seems popular
Asks, answers questions
Offers suggestions
Sometimes in trouble with Mr. Ros
Talking to friends instead of listening
Doesn't want to move from friends
Tries to negotiate with Mr. Ros

[Mid of six-week term]
Says to me
Why are you here?[21]
Always in Drama classes
Learning to be a Drama teacher?

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[21] Unlike in the Drama 9 and Drama 7 courses I participated in from January to April 2004, I did not give a formal introduction of myself in which I tried to explain my presence at River's Edge and in the Drama classrooms. Not knowing how to introduce myself or explain my presence in Drama so that youth might understand my purpose, I asked Mr. Ros if he would be comfortable with me not introducing myself during the first class of Tessa's Drama 7 course other than simply telling my name.

I say
Doing research
Want to learn about youths' lives in schools
She wonders
Do you go to other classrooms too?
Tell her
No, just Drama
Fun, interactive
Good place to meet students
Hoping to meet potential participants

Learning task:
Use children's storybook
Write five scenes
Tell, show story

Work in groups assigned by Mr. Ros
Questions, complaints emerge
Why can't we work with our friends?
Like usual

Mr. Ros doesn't engage
Remains focused on assignment
One group member will read storybook
Others will act out scenes

She chooses book for group
Explains why/how a good choice
Takes lead in figuring out scenes
Responds when group members are fooling around
Re-focuses their attention on learning task
Seems to want to do good work
Reads storybook when presenting to class

[Toward the end of term]
Kent
Telling me family plans for European summer vacation
She joins our conversation
Her family also travelling to Europe
2-week summer vacation
Says she's excited
I tell places I've been, things I've done in Europe
She can't wait for summer holidays
For Grade 7 to be over

Says she likes school

It's fun
Loves Physical Education classes
Loves to play sports
Plays on school soccer team
Also on community soccer team
(Interim research text based on field notes, April 21 - June 15 2004)

As made visible in the above word image, the time I spent with Tessa in the Drama classroom was often as she and a partner, or several other group members, wrote and rehearsed scripts to be presented in class. For the most part, Tessa and I did not explore stories of who she was and who she was becoming other than stories of her liking school at River's Edge because she experienced it as fun and that she loved Physical Education classes and playing soccer. Rather, during our in-classroom time together, I worked alongside Tessa, and other youth, offering ideas and suggestions focused on assigned Drama tasks. Still, my field notes showed that as the six-week Drama 7 course unfolded, I came to see Tessa as caring about, and capable of, doing work that would be considered as academically strong. I interpreted her in this way as I watched her come up with ideas and take the lead in making group decisions, volunteer to present her work to the class rather than waiting to be asked or told by Mr. Ros, respond to group members who were off-task in ways that brought them back on-task and be actively involved in whole class discussions. I saw her as taking up, and being looked upon by peers as having, a leadership role in the classroom. I understood her as curious, out-going, friendly and popular among her classmates and as trusting her own knowing. My understandings of who she was and who she was becoming were informed by how she initiated questions to me about my presence in the Drama classroom, her joining Kent's and my in-progress conversation, her interactions with peers, the storytelling she engaged

in with Mr. Ros and how she tried to negotiate with Mr. Ros whenever he told her and her friends to move apart because they were talking rather than listening.

It was, then, from the relational space that seemed to be emerging between Tessa and I in the Drama classroom and, as well, my desires to know more about how the unfolding life of a girl in Grade 7 who was storied by others as a talker, questioner and negotiator that I invited Tessa as well as her mom, Anne, to become participants in my narrative inquiry. In addition to field notes I wrote about the time Tessa and I spent together in the Drama classroom (April to mid-June 2004), my field texts also included five audio-recorded and transcribed research conversations with Tessa and two audio-recorded and transcribed research conversation with Anne. While I met Tessa when she was in Grade 7, we did not engage in research conversations until the following September when she had moved into Grade 8 at River's Edge. More of Tessa's, as well as Anne's, stories are told in Chapter Five, *Troubling The Intergenerational Story Of "Good" Student*.

Additional Understandings Emerge In A Middle Space

During the time I engaged in research conversations with Muskaan, Abby and Tessa as well as their parents and began to analyze my field texts, three other critical experiences were unfolding in my life. One was co-authoring *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers* (2006) with Jean Clandinin, Janice Huber, Shaun Murphy, Anne Murray Orr, Marni Pearce and Pam Steeves. Picking up on Janice's and Jean's earlier work (Huber & Clandinin, 2005), we played with the notion that as children's and teacher's lives intersected, and bumped against each other, in curriculum making, each child's and teacher's life curriculum was

being composed. Although I had previously read Jean's and Janice's work, my understandings of a curriculum of lives expanded through the writing of our book.

Another experience was that I moved to teach at an elementary-junior high school in the city centre. Bringing the understandings I was coming to through the writing of our book to my day to day working with youth and families in the school supported me to come to still deeper understandings of a curriculum of lives being composed in classrooms and schools. Attending to the youths' and families' lives as they met, and bumped against, each other, teacher and school stories, and subject matter, I came to see that the meeting of family and school stories embedded within cultural, institutional and social narratives was another way to understand a curriculum of lives.

The other experience unfolding in my life was my re-connecting with Ryley and his mom, Sylvia. Janice, Jean, Ryley and Sylvia had initially met years earlier as their lives intersected in the narrative inquiry at City Heights School. A couple of years later, I came to know Ryley and Sylvia as Jean, Janice and I worked as teacher-researchers in Ryley's Grade 5 classroom. Re-connecting with Ryley and Sylvia when Ryley was in Grade 9, I began to learn that Ryley's and Sylvia's stories to live by were often bumping against school stories and stories of school being lived out in the city centre school to which I had just moved. As I listened to their stories I learned that in this bumping, Ryley was increasingly "being excluded" and "drifting off" from school (Smyth, Hattam, Cannon, Edwards, Wilson, & Wurst, 2004). Sharing stories of Ryley's and Sylvia's unfolding experiences at school with Janice and Jean led us (Jean, Janice and I) to write a paper where we explored our "relational responsibilities as narrative inquirers" by taking up "questions such as: Who are we in the ongoing life stories of children and families

with whom we have previously engaged in narrative inquiry? What are our long-term responsibilities to these children and families?" (Huber, Clandinin & Huber, 2006, p. 211). While the focus of our paper was on our thinking through our ethical long-term relational responsibilities to Ryley and Sylvia, we were also, as we wrote, engaging in conversations around the meeting of Ryley's and Sylvia's, as well as our (Janice's, Jean's and my) family stories with school stories and stories of school. I imagine it was because Jean, Janice and I were coauthoring this paper that during our conversations I continued to come to additional understandings of all of our unfolding life curriculums.

It was in this way, then, that these interwoven experiences of writing *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers* (2006), of working with youth and families, such as Ryley and Sylvia, in a school new to me and coming to know tensions they were experiencing in the school, and writing *Relational responsibilities of narrative inquirers* (2006) created a middle space for me. This middle space—this space of time and further experiences that unfolded between my writing of my research proposal in 2003 and my inquiry into the field texts of my inquiry with Muskaan, Tessa and Abby and their parents—critically shaped the ways in which my attention became focused on the negotiation of each youth's life curricula.

Moving From Composing Field Texts To Research Texts

Writing my narrative accounts of Muskaan's, Tessa's and Abby's unfolding life curricula, I began by reading and re-reading my field notes and transcripts of research conversations—both transcripts of research conversations with Muskaan, Tessa and Abby as well as with Jake, Geeta, Rishi and Anne. From these field texts, then, I selected words and phrases to compose word images as interim research texts. In other research texts

where we have composed word images, we explored how word images were a way for us to create images of a particular person or persons (Clandinin & Huber, 2005). We also explored how "creating word images is a highly interpretive process" because it may portray "a unidimensional account of … [a person's] unfolding stories over time" and that we realized "to this one telling there are multiple other possible tellings" (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 99). The process we used as we composed word images in these texts and, which, then, I used in the writing of this research text, drew loosely on the ideas of composing found poetry developed by Richardson (1990) and Butler-Kisber (2002). Both Richardson and Butler-Kisber worked from interview and conversation transcripts, as they "found" participants' words and phrases and pulled them into new interpretive texts they called "found poetry." While the intention in composing both word images and found poetry is "to re-create lived experience" (Richardson, 1990, p. 121), my understanding is that in the writing of found poetry more specific attention is given to "reveal[ing] rhythms, pauses, emphasis, breath-points, syntax, and diction" (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 233).

As I moved from Chapter Three where I wrote word images of Windrum's unfolding life curriculum into Chapter Four, which explores Abby's unfolding life curriculum, I wanted to push my use of word images further. I did this by working with the image of a rope as a way to try to show the multiple stories threaded into Abby's identity. Then, as I moved into Chapter Five, which explores Tessa's unfolding life curriculum, still feeling the need to find a more resonant way to show an individual's identity making I played with Bateson's (1990) metaphor of our lives being like a "collage" (p. 9) that are "pieced together from disparate elements" (p. 10). It was in this

way that I composed an identity image as the interim research texts I worked with in this chapter. In making an identity image I used word images I had already composed and, then, by letting the image build upon itself, I worked to create a more temporal image of Tessa's unfolding identity making. In the same way that creating word images is "a highly interpretive process" so, too, was trying to show stories threading together and becoming interwoven in Abby's identity making and trying to create a more temporal telling of Tessa's identity making through an identity image.

As with any writing, the interim research texts I composed were reshaped over time. Reading the texts aloud many times to both myself and to others facilitated making necessary changes as this process made visible places where I was straying and, as well, where I needed to let participants' words and phrases say more. Working through the processes of composing interim research texts allowed me to move toward more centered understandings of both the wholeness as well as the shifting and unfolding of Munkasm's, Rishi's, Geeta's, Tessa's, Anne's, Abby's and Jake's stories. These interim research texts, then, became the foundation on which I wrote my narrative accounts of Munkasm, Tessa and Abby.

While earlier in this chapter, I introduced Abby, Munkasm and Tessa in the order in which I met each of them, this is not the order in which my narrative accounts of them are presented. Rather, for the conceptual reasons explained above, my narrative account of Munkasm appears first (Chapter Three), followed by my narrative account of Abby (Chapter Four) and, then, my narrative account of Tessa (Chapter Five). In Chapter Six, I return to my research puzzle and responded with what Munkasm, Tessa and Abby, and their parents, showed me about the interconnections between curriculum making and

family and school stories embedded within cultural narratives. In Chapter Seven, my attention turns toward teacher education and, by drawing on my growing understandings of curriculum making, I explore how I imagine Career & Technology Studies teacher education as a landscape for negotiating a curriculum of lives. I focused on Career & Technology Studies teacher education in this chapter because, for the most part, my experiences as a teacher have been in the context of this subject matter. It is also potential opportunities to work with pre-service Career & Technology Studies teachers that draws me toward becoming a teacher educator.

Negotiating Ethics Throughout Narrative Inquiries

While my narrative inquiry has been shaped by Tessa's, Muskaan's, and Abby's, as well as their parents' and my narratives of experience, it has also been ethically guided by the work of researchers such as Clandinin & Connelly (2000), Coles (1997), Craig & Huber (2007), Huber, Clandinin & Huber (2006), Josselson (2007), Nelson (2002), Noddings (1984) and Piquemal (2005) as well as guidelines required by the University of Alberta Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board. Complying with university requirements, I completed an ethics review that included letters of informed consent for working with youth, parent and teacher participants. These letters of informed consent explained that my research study was part of a larger national research study and that I would be participating in events in and outside the classroom. In addition to writing field notes about my participation in these events, the letters explained that participants and I would engage in audio-recorded research conversations and that transcripts of these conversations would be given to them and discussed. The letters informed participants that writing based on this inquiry would be submitted for publication in journals and

presentations would be made at local, national, and international conferences. Also explained in the letters were participants' rights to choose not to participate and, that after they agreed to participate they could still withdraw from the research at any time.

Adhering to the University of Alberta's ethical guidelines, I discussed the contents of consent letters with each participant. With Muskaan, Abby and Tessa, discussions were in person at school. During these discussions, I asked each of them to discuss their potential participation as well as the details of the letter with their parents prior to signing it. I contacted Anne, Jake, and Geeta by telephone. In each of these conversations, we discussed the consent letter their daughter was being invited to sign, the consent letter they were being invited to sign for their participation and, as well, the consent letter giving permission for their child's participation. As mentioned earlier, Mr. Ros also signed a consent letter in which he gave his consent for everything except engaging in audio-recorded and transcribed research conversations.

Since narrative inquiry is an unfolding, emergent, and relational research process, the negotiation of informed consent also needs be an ongoing aspect throughout the unfolding of the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig & Huber, 2007; Josselson, 2007). Similar to how these researchers have raised important ethical tensions and dilemmas, so, too, did Coles (1997) when he asked researchers to consider:

> What are one's obligations not to oneself, one's career, the academic world, or the world of readers, but to the people who are, after all, slowly becoming not only one's "sources" or "contacts" or "informants," but one's graciously tolerant and open-handed teachers and friends—*there*, week after week … *there* in their available yet so vulnerable and hard-pressed and precarious lives? (pp. 61-62)

Wanting to honor the "graciously tolerant and open-handed teachers and friends" that Abby, Geeta, Anne, Muskaan, Jake, Tessa and Rishi have become in my life as well as their ongoing informed consent, I shared drafts of Chapter Three, *Curriculum Making In The Meeting Of Muskaan's Life And Stories Of School*, with Muskaan, Geeta and Rishi and of Chapter Five, *Troubling The Intergenerational Story Of "Good" Student*, with Tessa, Anne and Mr. Ros. Abby and Jake chose not to take up this invitation in relation with Chapter Four, *Composing A Life ... Becoming An Actress ... And So Much More*. Working with field texts to write chapters three, four and five, I tried to attend to the stories participants told from a place of "wakefulness" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 182). Still, I recognized the research texts created were my interpretations and understandings of Muskaan's, Abby's, Tessa's, Rishi's, Geeta's, Jake's and Anne's lived experiences. As well, they were texts in which I felt I was asking each participant to make public stories of their lives. Although living out the ethical responsibility of sharing drafts, drafts which in the process of writing had become a part of me, was not easy as it positioned me in a vulnerable place, it mattered deeply to me that participants and I sit together to read, discuss and, if necessary, make changes to my narrative accounts of their lives. I was able to live out this ethical responsibility in-person with Tessa, with Anne and with Mr. Ros but was not able to do so with Muskaan, Rishi and Geeta because of the great physical distance that separated our lives. Instead, the version of *sitting together* I lived with them was sending a draft of Chapter Three via email and, then, discussing it in a lengthy conversation on the telephone.

Chapter Three: Curriculum Making In The Meeting Of Muskaan's Life And Stories Of School

Driving several hours to the city where Muskaan and her family moved in July, I was excited about reconnecting with Muskaan but it was the story fragment she shared earlier in the week on the phone that preoccupied my thinking. Now, several days after our phone conversation as I drove to Muskaan's new home, I wondered, had I really heard her say, "When you get here I will tell you about how I am in Grade 9 again" (field note, September 22 2004). How, I wondered, could she be in Grade 9 again given that she passed Grade 9 according to her report card at River's Edge and that she also passed the Grade 9 provincial achievement tests. During our time together from April to June in the Drama classroom, I watched Muskaan take great care with her work and with her in-classroom interactions with others. By this time, the stories Muskaan told during our research conversations of her former school experiences in Kenya clearly created images for me of a teen-aged girl who cared about, and saw herself, as being both an academic and a well-behaved student. From our previous research conversations, I knew attending university upon completion of high school was a story Muskaan expected to live and that opportunities for her and Raju, her younger brother, to attend university in a Western country had been central in their family decisions to immigrate to Canada and to the private schooling Muskaan and Raju experienced in Kenya. Based upon Muskaan's and my previous conversations, I sensed widening life opportunities for Muskaan and Raju were always central in family decision making.

As I continued to wonder about Muskaan being in Grade 9 again, my thinking returned to Muskaan's and my research conversation in mid-June, three months earlier. I

recalled how, during our discussion around the upcoming Grade 9 provincial achievement tests, Muskaan said she was nervous about the exams especially since she had missed so much of the school year. To "catch up," she explained, she would start studying "the minute I get home." She said she became "more nervous" about attending high school after a friend told her that if she did not do well in Grade 9 and on the provincial achievement tests it would lead to "problems in high school." Teachers were also telling her and the other grade nine students a similar story, saying that, "we have to take [high school] more seriously because the work load increases" (transcript of a one-on-one research conversation, June 2004).

I also recalled, from Muskaan's and my in-classroom conversations, that during the previous spring Muskaan had registered into academically streamed Grade 10 courses at Linfield, the high school closest to River's Edge and to her home (field note, May 4 2004). However, these earlier plans to attend Linfield changed when Muskaan's family decided to move to another city in Alberta, a move necessitated by Rishi's, Muskaan's dad's, employment (field note, June 9 2004). Earlier in the spring Muskaan had explored with me how her dad, after being unable to find suitable employment in the city where their family was currently living, had taken a job in another city several hours drive away. This meant that Geeta, Muskaan's mom, and the children lived separated from Rishi during the weekdays and that Rishi drove several hours each weekend to return home to his family. While living in this way was difficult, Muskaan talked about how it was necessary since it let her and Raju finish out the school year at River's Edge (field notes, May 19 2004 & June 3 2004). However, having already chosen the community in which they would live in the second Alberta city following their move in July, I knew

from Muskaan's and my June research conversation that Muskaan had registered at Westhill, the high school closest to this community. What, I wondered, changed Muskaan's plans to attend high school? Why wasn't she attending Grade 10 at Westhill?

Attempting To Find Narrative Coherence

As I continued my drive to Muskaan's new home my curiosity over her being in Grade 9, again, grew. I wondered how was it possible for a school district to return a student to Grade 9 after she had passed the provincial achievement tests. However, knowing how quickly the city to which Muskaan moved in July was growing, I thought perhaps the schools there had become too full. Maybe Muskaan had meant that the number of youth registered at Westhill had exceeded capacity and that some youth in Grade 10 were being temporarily held in nearby junior high schools until alternate high school placements could be figured out. Drawing upon my own experiences as a way to find narrative coherence (Carr, 1986) in Muskaan's situation, I recalled how, years earlier on my first day as a youth in Grade 7, I and the other Grade 7 students were told that there was not enough space in the secondary area of our Grades K-12 school to accommodate the larger than normal number of secondary students. Therefore, prior to youth returning from summer vacation, decisions had been made that the Grade 7 students would remain in the elementary wing. Reconnecting with how betrayed I had felt as a Grade 7 student when the reality sank in of what it meant to me to be held in an elementary school context, I wondered if Muskaan was beginning Grade 10 within a junior high school context due to inadequate space within the nearby high school. How, I wondered, was she experiencing this and making sense of it. While Muskaan had never explicitly stated that she saw herself as more mature than other youth in her Grade 9

classes at River's Edge, she had explored during our previous research conversations how she felt some of her classmates needed to take their studies and role as student more seriously. For example, she said, "They do their homework in class. When it's supposed to be marked they will write the answers at that time. That shows that [they're] not working at all" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004). I wondered if Muskaan was starting Grade 10 in a junior high school context, had she and her family been a part of this decision-making. Or, was it, as I experienced as a youth in Grade 7, a decision made in the absence of youth and families and delivered down onto us?

Unable to imagine it was possible Muskaan was in Grade 9 again or that the high schools throughout this large city could not accommodate all of the students[22], by the time I arrived to the city outskirts I was convinced Muskaan must have been simply playing a joke. Although I had not known her for a long time or in contexts outside of school and research conversations, I sensed Muskaan embodied Lugones' (1987) understanding of playfulness, that is, she did not confine herself only to "worlds" where she knew all the rules and outcomes. Instead, I saw her as open to uncertainty, willing to take risks, and as engaging "self construction or reconstruction" (p. 17). I wondered if Muskaan shared this story fragment with me as a way to encourage knowing her in more complex ways. Or, perhaps, was it her way of preoccupying me so I would have less time to feel nervous about meeting Geeta and Rishi for the first time?

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[22] According to Alberta Commission on Learning report, *Every child learns. Every child succeeds.*, (October, 2003) the number of school-aged children in Alberta is declining. They wrote, between 2000 and 2016, the school-aged population is ... projected to decline by close to 80,000 students or just over 12%.... It's possible that there will be more school-aged children as more people come to the province seeking careers and jobs, but it is unlikely this will offset declines that result from a lower birthrate (p. 26).

Reconnecting With Muskaan

As Muskaan greeted me at the door and welcomed me into her family's home, my attention turned away from the story fragment that preoccupied my thinking during my drive and, instead, became focused on how good it felt to be seeing Muskaan again, to be meeting Rishi and Geeta, and to the profound gift I felt I was being given by so warmly being invited into their home. It was some time later that day, during Muskaan's, Rishi's, Geeta's and my first audio-recorded group research conversation, that I learned the story of Muskaan being re-placed into Grade 9 and, to my further surprise, that Raju had also been re-placed into Grade 7. The following interim research text was written from the transcript of our research conversation that afternoon.

> With the understanding that Muskaan was already registered for Grade 10 at Westhill, Rishi and Geeta went to the junior high school in the community in which they had settled to register Raju into Grade 8. At this school, they were told they needed to first register their son at the school district's central office. Geeta went alone to the new school district's central office. There, she was asked if there were any other children. She replied, "Yes, my daughter and she's going to Westhill." Then she was asked, "How old is she?" Answering that her daughter was 13 years old, Geeta was informed, "She can't go to high school. She's too young." Geeta was also told that prior to registering Muskaan and Raju into schools, they needed to come to the school district's central office for an assessment including an English as a Second Language test. Geeta responded with, "My children are not English as a Second Language" and supplied records from River's Edge, which summarized Muskaan's and Raju's achievements from

April to June 2004. These records made personnel at the school district's central office "very upset" and "shocked." "They said they were going to call River's Edge and ask, 'How did you accept these kids in those grades?'" When Geeta showed an acceptance letter from Linfield, the high school Muskaan would have attended had they not moved, the school district central office personnel said, "It's not possible [and] just became very difficult.... Once she's in a senior high she should be 15." Geeta explained Muskaan's birthday was in October so regardless of waiting a year, she would be only 14 next September. She would not turn 15 until October. To this, Geeta was told, "It's only two months difference. It's acceptable." She also was told she needed to bring in "all [their] landing papers."

Although she "really tried," Geeta was unable to shift the institutional narratives, the stories of school, she encountered in the new school district, that is, that Muskaan and Raju must be English as a Second Language as well as that they were too young to proceed into the next grades. Therefore, before Muskaan and Raju could be registered in schools, they took the mandated assessments, both an ESL placement assessment and a grade level assessment. Muskaan described the assessments as "a test in ancient math.... For the English tests, we had to write a paragraph, ... then [a] spelling thing ... and test [our] vocab." Muskaan was given "a Grade 8 test" and even though she did "very well," was told she had "to go to Grade 9 because she was too young." Raju was given the "Grade 6 assessment." And, although he had successfully passed Grade 7 according to his records from River's Edge and did well on the grade level assessment, including achieving 100% on the math portion, was re-placed into Grade 7. Both Muskaan and Raju

were informed they did not need ESL assistance. (Interim research text based on transcript of group research conversation, September 2004)

Narratively Inquiring Into The Story: Coming To See The Story As Curriculum Making

As I first listened to and later as I wrote this interim research text, I was filled with many tension-filled wonders. Why, when Geeta explained she had a daughter who was already registered at Westhill, was the first and only question asked by the school district's central office personnel focused on Muskaan's age? Why were demands made for Muskaan's family's landing papers when Muskaan's and Raju's progress reports from River's Edge would have shown provincial student identification numbers and, as well, that they were only transferring from another Alberta school district? Why was Muskaan's age used as the only marker for determining the grade in which she should be registered while her progress report from River's Edge as well as her scores on provincial achievement tests were seemingly ignored? Was age the singular marker by which this school district measured all students who were transferring from other Albertan and Canadian school districts? Were Geeta's surprised reactions and assurances that her children were not ESL excused or ignored because of her South Asian ancestry? Or, did this happen because Geeta spoke English[23] in a way that was different than how the school district's central office personnel spoke English?

Considering closely stories of school unfolding in this moment, that is, that Muskaan was being seen through only two categories—age and immigrant, I began to wonder about how a curriculum seemed to be being written for who Muskaan was and who she could be, a curriculum that was marking out a life path for her to follow, a

[23] Geeta emigrated from India to Kenya as an adult when she married Rishi. While she studied English in India and had spoken it since moving to Kenya, her first language was Punjabi.

curriculum which was shaping her unfolding "course of life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) or "curriculum of life" (Clandinin et al, 2006; Huber & Clandinin, 2005). I wondered, as youth and their families interact with stories of school in *an off a particular school landscape place*, such as a school district's central office, might their interaction be understood as curriculum making?

Yet, as I began to wonder about Muskaan's experience of being re-placed into Grade 9 as curriculum making it was not easy for me to think in this way. I made numerous attempts as I tried to stretch my understandings of curriculum making in this way but always became stalled in my thinking. Not wanting to give up and turn away from where my wonderings had led, I recognized I needed to backup and to make clear for myself and others my understandings of curriculum, understandings which have been brought up in the tradition of Clandinin's and Connelly's, and the colleagues with whom they have worked, program of research.

Re-grounding Myself

From my experiences as a teacher I knew the most common interpretation of curriculum within schools was as defined in the Encarta World English Dictionary: "the subjects taught at an educational institution, or the elements taught in a particular subject" (retrieved January 31, 2007). When I heard the word curriculum on school or school district landscapes I understood what was being referred to were government developed documents which, for each subject matter taught in school, described a scope and sequence as well as defined required learning outcomes in terms of what knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should gain or develop within a specific framework of time. I also understood in this interpretation of curriculum who I was as teacher was transmitter

of knowledge, skills and attitudes and students with whom I worked were seen as empty vessels to be filled. Attending to how curriculum was defined, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), as "[L., = course, career (*lit.* and *fig.*)); *specifically* a regular course of study or training, as at a school or university (the recognized term in the Scottish universities); curriculum vitae, the course of one's life; a brief account of one's career," Clandinin and Connelly (1992) explored that "in defining curriculum, educators have focused on the first part of the *OED* definition" (p. 364). Like Clandinin and Connelly, I neither shared this singular understanding of curriculum nor was it the interpretation with which I wished to work as I tried to understand my earlier interim research text within the context of Muskaan's and her family's lives. Rather, I shared a narrative understanding of curriculum, that is, "curriculum as a course of life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 393).

Drawing on Dewey's (1938) ideas of "situation," "continuity," and "interaction" and Schwab's (1962) four curriculum commonplaces, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) explored curriculum as at the intersections of teacher, student, subject matter, and milieu. Thinking in this way, opened up possibilities for Connelly and Clandinin to understand teachers' "personal practical knowledge" which they explored as:

> a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons.... It is in the person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body, and in the person's future plans and actions.... It is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (p. 25)

Developing further their understandings of teacher knowledge, Clandinin & Connelly (1995) came to see teachers as "curriculum makers" and drew attention to how curriculum could be "viewed as an account of teachers' and students' lives together in schools and classrooms" where "the teacher is seen as an integral part of the curriculum process and in which teacher, learners, subject matter, and milieu are in dynamic interaction" (p. 392).

Continuing to engage in research alongside teachers and graduate students, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) came to understand that teachers live storied lives in storied contexts or milieus. Developing the metaphor of a "professional knowledge landscape," they showed the complex historical, temporal, personal, professional, relational, institutional, and moral qualities of schools. They explained the professional knowledge landscape as having two different epistemological and moral places. "In classroom" places, they showed, were mostly with places where teachers felt secure to live their teacher knowledge alongside children and youth with whom they worked. "Out-of-classroom" places were professional, commonplace places filled with imposed prescriptions delivered "down the conduit" (p. 9) in such places as staff meetings, conferences, parent meetings, and so on. They also showed the professional knowledge landscape of a school could be understood as a storied set of teacher stories, stories of teachers, school stories, and stories of schools.

As Connelly and Clandinin, and research teams with whom they worked, focused on teachers' and administrators' lives as the professional knowledge landscape of schools, they recognized the interconnectedness of teachers' personal practical knowledge, context, and identity. They defined "stories to live by" as the "institutional

thread ... to understand how knowledge, context, and identity are linked and can be understood narratively. Stories to live by ... [are] given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). In this work, Connelly and Clandinin made visible how teachers' stories to live by shape the curriculum they live in relation to subject matter, children and families, and milieu and, as well, as how children and families, milieu and subject matter can shape teachers' unfolding stories to live by. They did not imply a teacher's identity is unitary and smooth. Rather, as Clandinin and Huber (2005) explored:

> Stories to live by are multiple, evolving, shifting, and contradictory. Over the course of a life, a teacher's story to live by is in flux, shifting as new situations are experienced, as new subject matter is taught, as new children are encountered, as new colleagues arrive, as new policies are enacted, as a teacher's life in school is lived. However, a teacher's story to live by is also in flux, shifting, as s/he finds new life partners, has and raises children, shifts in socio-economic status, loses persons, friends, colleagues, attends to larger socio-political events and so on. (p. 45)

Building on this narrative foundation of curriculum making, Huber and Clandinin (2002) and Clandinin et al (2006) continued to stay alongside, and engage in inquiry with, teachers in classrooms but also began working with children in these classrooms. The research puzzles central in these studies focused on the meeting of diverse children's, teachers', families, and administrators' lives in school contexts. In each of these studies, as researchers worked to further understand how children's and teachers' stories to live by intersect with each other and, as well, milieu and subject matter in curriculum making

in both in- and out-of-classroom places, we showed how curriculum could be seen as "negotiating a curriculum of lives" (Clandinin et al, 2006, p. 135).

Imagined Research Puzzle: Shifting As Muskaan's Stories Lead Me Elsewhere

As explored earlier, in Chapters One and Two—*Narrative Beginnings* and *Situating The Inquiry*, I imagined, as I engaged in research with youth and their families, my inquiry would expand my understandings of the narratives of experiences youth and families bring to school landscapes and how their narratives were shaping, and being shaped by, school stories lived on those particular school landscapes. I imagined the unfolding of my inquiry would lead me to stories about each youth's evolving life curriculum as her/his stories to live by, and perhaps other family member's stories to live by, intersected, and bumped against, teacher stories, other students' stories, administrator's stories, subject matter, and school stories enacted in both in- and out-of-classroom places. I did not imagine my research leading me toward inquiring into a teen-aged girl's unfolding life curriculum as she, and her family, interacted with stories of school, and the personnel who were ratifying these stories, in an off a particular school landscape place. Still, as Muskaan, Geeta and Rishi recounted their experiences with stories of school at the new school district central office it was to this profound life-shaping situation that their stories led. It was from this place, then, that I wondered how the curriculum which was being written for Muskaan at the school district central office intersected, and bumped against, her evolving stories to live by: a curriculum where Muskaan was seen as needing to prove her competencies with English even though it was her first language; a curriculum where Muskaan was seen as needing to prove by writing a "Grade 8 test" that she was capable of Grade 9 subject matter even though she had

passed Grade 9 in another Alberta school district as well as the Grade 9 provincial achievement tests; a curriculum where Muskaan was seen as too young to proceed to Grade 10 but, yet, after a year, it would become "acceptable" for her even though she still would not be 15 years old; a curriculum where Muskaan was seen, as Chan (2006) explored, as an immigrant and, therefore, as "need[ing] to 'adapt' to 'our' school communities" (p. 173). And, it was also from this place that I wondered how the curriculum being written for Muskaan at the school district central office intersected, and bumped against, Rishi's and Geeta's stories to live by as well as the hopes and dreams they carried for widening their children's life opportunities.

Inquiring Into Muskaan's And Her Parents' Response

To further understand Muskaan's, Geeta's and Rishi's experiences I returned to the transcript of our September 2004 research conversation. In doing so, I learned something about how each of them felt about, and were making sense of, Muskaan being re-placed into Grade 9. The following interim research text was written from the transcript of our research conversation.

> Picking up on my question to Muskaan and her parents as to how they felt about what happened, Muskaan replied, "kind of pissed off because in [the city where River's Edge is located] I could have gone to Grade 10." Rishi and Geeta explained, at the time, they were surprised that they needed to bring in "all their landing papers" given that their children were simply transferring from another school district within Alberta and that Geeta was already providing records from this former school district. These records, Rishi explained, "should have been enough to tell them we're only moving from [one Alberta city to another]. But I

guess in [this new city] they are dealing with so many immigrants. I think the bottom line was just that we're immigrants." To this, Geeta shared the school district story she was told, that is, "anybody coming" to register in schools within this system, regardless of their background and whether they had moved from within or outside of Alberta or Canada, were being required to take the assessments. While she seemed to trust this story, she raised concerns about their children finding school "boring. They're not learning anything new.... For a year they are to repeat and repeat." Rishi added, "it's alright because they [referring to Muskaan and Raju] had spent only three months at River's Edge" and "hadn't done everything from September to Easter Holidays [end of March].... I'm looking at it in the positive aspect ... they might have found it a bit difficult.... They have not covered a lot of things which might be relevant to the next grade." Later in the conversation, Rishi also shared that when Muskaan was accepted into Linfield, the high school she planned to attend had her family not moved in July, he telephoned the principal because "I was concerned that Muskaan might not have been ready to go to high school." When the principal called back, after checking Muskaan's scores, "he told me he doesn't see a problem, he thinks it's alright for her to go to high school. Only to come [to the new city] and then we find totally new things here." (Interim research text based on transcript of group research conversation, September 2004)

Considering closely Muskaan's, Rishi's and Geeta's responses I was reminded of the temporality embedded within their words. At the time, Muskaan had only been back in Grade 9 for not even a month and perhaps she was not yet experiencing the concerns

her mom raised of finding school "boring" because she was "not learning anything new" but, instead, having to "repeat and repeat." I wondered if this research conversation had unfolded later in the school year, might Muskaan have felt more than "kind of pissed off?" Given that Muskaan cared about, and understood herself as, being both an academic and a well-behaved student, might she have felt the risks were too high to go to Grade 10 as she knew she did not meet the only marker held up in the new school district for her to proceed to high school, that is, that she needed to be 15 years old? Might she, and also possibly Geeta and Rishi, have thought back to the warnings Muskaan was given the previous spring that if she did not do well in Grade 9 and on the provincial achievement tests it would lead to "problems in high school?" Was Muskaan also thinking about how opportunities for her, and for Raju, had been central in the family decision to immigrate to Canada and how she needed to be cautious of taking risks that could narrow her future possibilities?

Initially Rishi responded by sharing his thoughts that, "the bottom line was just that we're immigrants" but, then, moved away from this story. Explaining he was "looking at it in the positive aspect," he said since Muskaan and Raju had missed much of the school year, they "might have found it a bit difficult" if they had proceeded onto the next grades. In this way, Rishi showed he was wondering if Muskaan's moving to high school might lead to problems because she had not completed an entire year of Grade 9 in an Alberta school context. However, as our conversation continued, Rishi highlighted how thinking in this way contradicted his earlier June conversation with the principal of Linfield who, after checking Muskaan's scores, had said he did not see a problem and thought it was alright for Muskaan to go to high school. Noting this

contradiction, Rishi seemed to return to his thinking that what was different were the "totally new things," totally new stories of school, they were encountering in the new city.

While I do not know why Rishi moved away from his initial response of "the bottom line" was they were immigrants, I wondered, might he have done so as an expression of "caring for" (Noddings, 1984) me as, by this time, he knew I was a teacher and, as well, that I was born, raised, and for most of my life, had lived in Alberta. Maybe he did so in response to the story Geeta shared, that is, that "anybody coming" to register in this school district, regardless of their background or if they were moving from within or outside of Alberta or Canada, were being required to take the assessments. Might he have moved toward a "positive" telling of the story because he needed, for himself and for his family, to play the believing game (Elbow[24], 1986)? I wondered are people who immigrate to Canada asked to play the believing game as it keeps alive the promotion of Canada as multicultural and as a place of opportunities. Do people who immigrate to Canada, or elsewhere, need to play the believing game to hold onto and to sustain the life dreams they imagined as they left their homelands and as they search to find threads of self-continuity (Bateson, 1990) upon a new landscape? I imagined as people pass the rigorous screening process of immigrating to Canada, they might perceive a message that they are the chosen ones, that they have become a part of "the True North strong and free" (lyrics from Canada's national anthem, *Oh Canada*), and, particularly in Alberta, that they have joined a province with booming possibilities. Considering, again,

[24] Elbow (1986) explored that emphasis on critical, deductive thinking reinforces doubt. Playing the believing game, on the other hand, encourages deeper listening, non-judgmental questioning, and an openness to learn more when we first come into contact with a new perspective or one that contradicts our own viewpoints.

Muskaan's response of being "a little pissed off" and Geeta's trust in the stories of school she was told in the school district's central office, I wondered if they, too, might have also been playing the believing game.

Yet, while I understood from my own experiences that, at times, I played the believing game as a way to hold onto, and to sustain, my life dreams, I wondered what else might be unfolding for Muskaan in this experience. How might the curriculum written for Muskaan in the new school district reverberate (Huber, Huber, & Clandinin, 2004) back across her stories to live by? How might these reverberations move forward, shaping her unfolding life curriculum and, as well, her understandings of who she could become in an Albertan/Canadian context?

Attending From Multiple Narrative Perspectives

Nelson (2002) explored how narrative approaches, because they not only move sideways to contexts but also backward and forward, "are better suited to ethical reflection" (p. 40).

> In a narrative approach, the social contexts are important, not because they guide the selection of the principles that will be used to resolve the case, but because of what they reveal about the identities of the participants: the religious, ethnic, gender, and other contexts in which a person lives her life contribute to her own and others' sense of who she is. How others see her crucially influences how they will respond to her, so it matters whether they get their contextual features right. ... But understanding how we got "here" is crucial to the determination of where we might be able to go from here, and this is where narrative is indispensable. The story of how the participants of the case came to their present pass is

> precisely a story, as is the narrative of the best way to go on in the future. The backward-looking story is explanatory; the forward-looking story is action-guiding. (pp. 39-40)

In the first part of this chapter, my attention was turned to context as I explored the stories of school which became woven into Muskaan's unfolding life curriculum as she registered in the new, or second, school district in Alberta. But, as Nelson explored, I also needed to move my inquiry backward and forward. Backward-looking stories would help me to carefully reconsider experiences that Muskaan and her family brought to the stories of school they encountered within this new school district and to more deeply understand their responses. Forward-looking stories would give me a way to thoughtfully think through how stories of school, shaped around school district policies, could be lived more attentive to, and inclusive of, the family stories of diverse youth and families. Within the upcoming backward- and forward-looking stories I continue to inquire into the directions of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), that is, forward, backward, inward and outward while also attending to place.

Composing Backward-looking Stories

To share backward-looking stories of Muskaan, I composed word images by selecting Muskaan's, Geeta's and Rishi's words, from across multiple research conversations, that created images of who Muskaan was and who she was becoming. The multiple research conversation transcripts between Muskaan and myself and among Muskaan, Rishi, Geeta and me were filled with many stories of Muskaan's and her family's life in Kenya and in Canada and, at times, my thinking about these stories. However, given my desires to understand "how [I] ... got here" (Nelson, 2002, p. 39),

here to my present wonderings about how the stories of school in the second Alberta school district might have reverberated across Muskaan's unfolding stories to live by, I attended to the transcripts with an eye on Muskaan's, Geeta's and Rishi's lives intersecting with school stories and stories of school. To distinguish between Muskaan's and her parents' words in the word image I italicized Muskaan's words whereas Geeta's and Rishi's words are woven together and presented in non-italic font.

Small, farming town
Private Kenyan school
Started Kindergarten when I was three
Three years in three Kinder courses
You do three classes there
Then, primary school

Didn't like Kenyan school system
A lot of people were changing
Even the government now
Trying to revert to British system

Kenyan universities
Admittance very competitive
Very overcrowded
Tensions high
Student strikes common
Strikes lead to riots

Move to Nairobi
Mainly for Muskaan and Raju
Wanted private British education system for them
More universal
Accepted in Britain
Maybe comparable to North America
Give Muskaan and Raju more opportunities

Prior to children starting British schools
Checked out schools
Black kids?
Indian kids?
White kids?
Wanted cosmopolitan schools
Kids from all types of backgrounds

Mix with everyone
Know people
Respect people
Not just for the color of their skin

School year in Kenyan system
Starts in January
Ends in October
School year in British system
Starts in September
Ends in June
Moved to Nairobi in July
Muskaan part way through Standard 6[25]

British school
Gave Muskaan an assessment test
She did well
Jumped ahead half a year
Joined secondary school
Grade 7
Same with Raju
Also jumped ahead half a year

British school owned by a Muslim
Only Ismaelis learn[ed] their religion
I'm Sikh
Most students Asian and Muslim
Also black students
White students
Respect each other
School's neither yours nor mine
We're all here to study
[Students] work real hard to pass
Make fun if you repeat the same class

Kind of difficult for me
[moving from Kenyan to British system]
British more advanced
Everything was new
Put in a lot of effort
Made it

Class prefect
Head of the class
Who should be?

---

[25] Standard 6 in the Kenyan school system is equivalent to Grade 6 in British system schools.

Teaching board decide
I got to be
Twice

Parent teacher association
Parents elected me chairman
Committee of eight parents
As committee, we assess what we have seen
And put recommendations to the school
Quite a powerful body

As parents
Could approach other parents
In our own way
These are our kids
It's only right
That issues be brought to us, solved with us

Private school
Paying through your nose
Have expecations
Government schools
Standards set by government
They don't have funds
They have limitations

Private schools
Quite expensive
Better if you go to private school
Better skills and everything
(Interim research text based on transcripts of one-on-one research conversations with Muskaan and group research conversations with Muskaan, Rishi & Geeta)

As Muskaan's, Rishi's and Geeta's storytelling moved backward in time and across place, I learned how Muskaan completed Grade 9 at 13 years old and I came to understand something more of Muskaan's, Geeta's and Rishi's stories to live by. Geeta's and Rishi's stories showed how "opportunities" for their children lived at the heart of their decision-making. Moving to Nairobi meant Muskaan and Raju could attend "more universal" and "cosmopolitan" British schools. It also meant Muskaan's family was separated as Rishi needed to continue to live in the small town during the weekdays in

order to run their intergenerational family construction company. Still, when Rishi was elected as chairman of the parent teacher committee at the British school in Nairobi that Muskaan was attending, he made time to live this role. Often, this meant attending regular Saturday or Sunday meetings. He saw his presence on this committee as important in that as a parent he could relate to other parents and, as well, it gave him opportunities to "assess" school happenings, make "recommendations" for the running of the school and work in partnership with school staff and other parents to "solve" issues.

Being attentive and responsible to how the Kenyan and British school systems followed different yearly rhythms, Muskaan's family moved to Nairobi in July, part way through Muskaan's year in Standard 6. Moving at this time meant Muskaan's and Raju's beginnings at the British system schools would be at the start of rather than part way through a school year. Starting at the private British school, Muskaan "did well" on assessment tests she was given and, as a result, "jumped" ahead which meant she was a year younger than the norm for her grade. Similarly, Raju also jumped ahead based on his scores on the assessments he was given. Initially, Muskaan revealed in stories she told, it was difficult for her as "everything was new" but, as she lived by stories of "put[ting] in a lot of effort," she "made it." Indeed, she became a "class prefect," a position reserved for students with high marks and excellent behavior.

Unlike Muskaan's family move from the small, farming town to Nairobi, the timing of their emigration from Kenya to Canada was not attentive to the rhythms of the school year or to the preparations and work involved in moving a family. Rather, Muskaan and her family were told by immigration officials, "You must leave in a month

or repeat the whole immigration process again" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004).

Such a rush
So much to do
Properties to sell
Cars to sell
Managed to sell only two cars
Couldn't sell everything in time
Left it with my uncle, dad's brother
Too much to do in a month

Gave half our household to maid
Gave things to dad's brother's wife
Neighbors and friends too

Eight suitcases
One each for clothes
The other four for bed sheets, towels, stuff like that

Dishes
Stuff like that
Dad's brother shipped later
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004)

Needing to leave Kenya in one month meant rushing to organize which necessities would fill the family's eight suitcases and travel with them to Canada, which items would be shipped once they were settled in Canada and which belongings would be sold or given away. It meant leaving family, friends and the intergenerational family business. And, it also meant leaving part way through Muthoni's year in Grade 9 at the private British school in Nairobi and arriving in Canada part way through the same school year (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004).

River's Edge
Cousin mentioned
Good school
Got house close
Uncle knew River's Edge was a good school

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] here

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

Think I'm a very good student
Very disciplined
She knows the expectations
Knows what to do
When to do

She's a responsible kid
(Interim research text based on transcripts of one-on-one research conversations with Muskaan and group research conversations with Muskaan, Geeta & Rishi)

Bringing these backward-looking stories alongside the curriculum written for Muskaan in the second Alberta school district, I gained further understandings of how this curriculum bumped up against stories Muskaan lived by. Understanding in this way helped me to begin to see that perhaps Muskaan was also "a little pissed off" because stories she carried of herself as hard-working and as academically successful were being written over or "blanked out" (Anzaldúa, 1990). As well, Muskaan had a story from her school experiences in Kenya that students "make fun if you repeat the same class." Although she passed Grade 9 at River's Edge and the provincial achievement tests, perhaps Muskaan understood herself in the stories of school in this the second Alberta school district as someone who now risked being made fun of as she was to repeat Grade 9. Making these connections, I saw, as Nelson (2002) noted, "how others [saw] her crucially influence[d] how they … respond[ed] to her" (p. 39). In Kenya, Muskaan was understood as a "class prefect," at River's Edge her teachers quickly came to expect high marks from her, and, then, in the second Alberta school district she was positioned as a youth who did not *measure up* and, therefore, needed to "repeat the same class" or grade.

As well, when Muskaan switched school systems in Kenya she jumped ahead half a year because she did well on the assessment tests. Registering at River's Edge there was no expectation for Muskaan to write a grade level assessment but, instead, documents

provided from her former school in Nairobi were accepted as sufficient and she was placed into Grade 9 to finish the grade she had started in Kenya. Moving to attend school in the second Alberta school district, the stories of school Muskaan encountered were, as Rishi expressed, "totally new." Within these stories of school, Muskaan needed to write not only a grade level assessment but also an ESL assessment. Still, unlike at the British school, this time her success on the grade level assessment did not determine Muskaan's appropriate grade but, instead, this was determined by her age.

Also made visible in my word image, Muskaan seemed to experience gaps among teachers' expectations, youths' work habits, and stories of discipline at River's Edge and those she recalled from her private school experiences both in rural Kenya as well as in Nairobi. Perhaps, these gaps were somewhat narratively coherent for Muskaan as she carried a story that it was "better if you go to private school … better skills and everything." Geeta and Rishi also carried a similar story, that is, that in private schools, because parents are "paying through [the] nose," they can have "high expectations." But, in government schools, the "standards" are set by the government. Perhaps, then, it was from this story that Muskaan's parents responded to decisions delivered down onto them and their children in the second Alberta school district. Their children were no longer attending private school where, as parents, they had a forum for expressing their expectations, solving issues in partnership with other parents and school staff, assessing school happenings and putting forth recommendations. Instead, now, Muskaan and Raju were attending public or government schools where school district and government policy-makers were setting the standards, thereby writing the stories of school.

Composing Forward-looking Stories

Attending to the intersection of Muskaan's life with stories of school, determined around school district policies, showed me how Muskaan's life curriculum was shaped within this intersection. In this way, I came to see that policies shape curriculum making both in schools and, as well, in an off a particular school landscape place such as a school district central office. Within this view of curriculum making, I wondered how the curriculum being written for Muskaan would have been otherwise if policy makers understood policy making as curriculum making. Understanding policy making in this way, then, it would necessarily become a fluid and alive process attentive to, and inclusive of, the diversity of each child's, each youth's, each family's stories to live by and the lives they are in midst of composing.

Chapter Four: Composing A Life … Becoming An Actress … And So Much More

Acting in major production at Prairie Theatre
Who Has Seen The Wind

Few people at theatre exactly like me
People to talk to about problems
Sharing bits and pieces of myself here and there
Made me more open
Made me find out more about myself
Changed my life

Two months
Being on stage in front of 800 people
Being somebody else, having emotion
Made me more open
Made me find out more about myself
Changed my life

Felt good about myself
Found out I could do so many more things than I thought
Made me more open
Made me find out more about myself
Changed my life

Saved my life
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

As Abby and I engaged in research conversations, she told passion-filled stories about how the theatre and her desire to have a career in acting were the main foci in her life. It was in this way, then, that as I began to compose a narrative account of Abby's unfolding life curriculum that I became focused on her passions for acting and ways in which her experiences connected to the theatre were central in stories she shared of who she was and who she was becoming. My reasons for beginning this narrative account with a word image that foregrounded Abby's passions for theatre and the dreams her experiences at Prairie Theatre shaped for her future, were twofold. I wanted to honor the prevalence of these stories in Abby's and my research conversations and I wanted Abby

to know I had heard how deeply her experiences of acting in *Who Has Seen The Wind* mattered to her. As Abby returned to tellings of her awareness of the beginnings of her desires to become a professional actress, and explored her experiences in *Who Has Seen The Wind* as "changing" and as "saving" her life, she storied how it had been through these experiences that she awakened to seeing that she could play with her identity and be somebody else while also exploring who she was and who she was becoming (Clandinin et al, 2006). Acting a part where she needed to show emotions as well as finding people like herself with whom she felt able to share "bits and pieces" of her life, Abby explained she began to compose new tellings of who she was and who she *could* be, that is, tellings where she realized she could do, be, become "so many more things" than she had earlier imagined as possible.

As I worked through multiple drafts of this initial word image and read and re-read transcripts of each of our research conversations, I realized that Abby seemed to position her experiences in the theatre as pivotal in her identity making. By attending closely to how she described these life "changing," life "saving" experiences, I awakened to how Abby, herself, had given me a structure for this chapter. What I saw was that in our first, as well as in other research conversations, Abby looked backward, forward, inward, outward and across place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) from these experiences. Moving in these multi-directions, Abby explored strands of interwoven story threads of her life curriculum as she shared stories of her experiences within family stories, theatre and acting stories, as well as teacher and school stories.

As I began to think through and to play with how I might visually represent and texturally describe my understandings of who Abby was and who she was becoming, I was drawn to Greene's (1995) thoughts where she explained:

> Neither my self nor my narrative can have … a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on … [my] way. My identity has to be perceived as multiple. (p. 1)

While I wanted to honor the dominance that Abby's experiences of acting in *Who Has Seen The Wind* seemed to hold in her life and in who she was becoming, I saw, as Greene wrote, Abby's identity was multiple and included more than a single strand of becoming an actress. I saw that her identity was, and continues to be, composed "at the crossing point of … many social and cultural forces" and that her life composition is far from complete. I saw, then, that Abby was on her way to becoming an actress and so much more.

Thinking about the multiple strands interwoven in Abby's identity making, I became drawn toward the image of a rope as something whole and made strong from the winding together of several strands which are each composed of multiple interwoven threads. What, I wondered, might I learn about Abby's unfolding life curriculum, that is, her ongoing composition of who she is and who she is becoming, by attending closely to each storied identity strand, and, as well, attending to the experiential threads interwoven within each strand, while also seeing each strand as woven into her stories to live by. What might attending in this way help me come to understand about continuities and discontinuities Abby experienced as she composed her life in the midst of family and school stories?

Please note: As my narrative account of Abby unfolds the text needs to be read by beginning with the word image as foregrounded on a strand of rope and positioned on the left-hand side of the page.

Stories Of Life As Lived Before *Who Has Seen The Wind*

I live in Lakeside
Went to Lakeside Elementary School
Like going to prep or boarding school
Nothing was allowed to be out of place
Everything sparkling
Need to be clean
Need to talk certain way
If seen like this
[demonstrates slouching]
They'd be like,
"Sit up, just sit up"
It was hell

The kids
They were all brats
They were all spoiled
Everyone was racist against me
They had no culture behind them
No respect for anyone else
It was hell
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

Reflecting on her experiences of living and attending elementary school in Lakeside community[26] from her vantage point as a student in Grade 9, Abby storied this neighborhood school as a context not unlike "a prep or boarding school" where there were certain "sparkling" ways to be and "nothing was allowed to be out of place." In Abby's telling these characterizations of Lakeside Elementary School seemed to mean that at least some children were made to change who they were in order to meet and to fit within school stories shaped by rigid standards. As I thought about how Abby described her experiences by saying "It was hell," I wondered had Abby felt that she needed to change so that she would be seen as acceptable within the school context. Yet, in Abby's further stories I sensed, through her descriptions of other children who attended the school, that even conforming to "certain way[s]" did not

[26] According to city demographic profiles, the community of Lakeside was described as predominately populated by people born in Canada whose mother tongue was English. China was the most common birthplace of those who had immigrated and Cantonese was the second most common mother tongue. Statistics showed most occupants were: university-educated, married with children, lived in single-detached homes, and had household incomes of $100,000 and over. (Please note: reference for city demographics withheld to protect the identities of participants).

necessarily ensure being accepted by classmates. Storying herself as "half Asian," Abby explained, "my dad's … Chinese, my mom's White" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004). Responding to my asking about the ancestries of the other children at Lakeside Elementary School, Abby expressed that they were "mostly White" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004).

As I thought about Abby's descriptions of her experiences at Lakeside Elementary School and, in particular, about her descriptions of classmates, I began to notice how she seemed to position herself as separate from the other children by how she repeatedly used "they" and "them" rather than "we" and "us" as she storied her experiences. Noting this, I wondered if another way to understand Abby's tellings of her experiences at Lakeside Elementary School was that she saw herself as different, that is: different because she was "half Asian" rather than either Asian or White; different because she was not racist; different because she did have respect for others; different because she had culture behind her; and so on. As I came to these wonderings, I was drawn toward questions about how Abby might have learned to tell these stories of herself and, as well, to story other children at Lakeside Elementary School in these ways. Similar to what Trinh (1989) described, Abby seemed to be living a story in which " 'difference' is essentially 'division' in the understanding of many" (p. 82). Thinking further about the multiple ways Abby might have seen herself as different and, therefore, as divided or separate from other children in the school, I wondered how such an attention to difference might have emerged between and among Abby and her classmates. How, I wondered, might practices of measuring Abby and her classmates against "certain way[s]" of being have created divisions or separations among the children. Considering

this, I was drawn to what Nelson's (1995) wrote about "found communities," that is, that " 'found' communities place us within a particular tradition; they give us a language, a culture.... Somehow fundamentally informed by one monolithic tradition" (p. 28). I wondered was it as Abby experienced "one monolithic tradition" in Lakeside Elementary School that she grew to name herself as "different" and classmates as "brats," "spoiled," "racist against ... [her]" and "ha[ving] no culture?" Coming to these wonders led me to further questions around how Abby's tellings of herself and of her classmates might have shifted had she experienced community-making in Lakeside Elementary School that was of the kind Dewey (1938) and Greene (1995) described as unfolding, evolving and necessarily always in the making? In such a view of community-making the emergent curriculum would, then, have been shaped by the ongoing lived experiences, questions and tensions of children's lives both in and outside of school. As I thought about how differently communities within classroom and school contexts can be constructed, I was reminded that, in my student and teacher experiences, all too often, if at all, a thread of community-making was only seen as a way to begin a school year but by mid to end September the focus shifted away from community- and relationship- making to getting on with mandated subject matter. In this view, the community made within the first few days or weeks was seen as unchanging and unchangeable throughout the year. Because it was not a fluid and shifting conceptualization of community always in the making, it could not be responsive to, or inclusive of, the ongoing lived experiences, questions and tensions of children's lives both in and outside of school. Smyth and Fasoli (2007), in their research with students, teachers and administrators at Mango High School, showed that stories such "student disengagement, disaffection and alienation" (p. 275) shifted

significantly when relationship-making, that is relationships which were fluid, responsive and always in the making, among students, staff and parents was placed "at the centre of everything" in the school. I wondered what stories Abby might have told about herself and her classmates if, as in Mango High School, community-making which held relationship-making as central had lived at the core of everything at Lakeside Elementary School.

Grade 5
Best year
In Grade 4/5 split
A lot of class was Asian
Maybe why
Nobody was really that racist
Grade 6
Absolutely horrible
Girls turned really mean and racist
Made fun because I'm half Asian
Made fun because my dad
works part time at a Native Reserve
It was horrible

Principal wouldn't do anything
Not one single thing
Made me and my family pretty mad
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

As Abby's tellings of her experiences within Lakeside Elementary School grew more detailed, she highlighted that Grade 5 had been her "best year" whereas Grade 6 was "absolutely horrible." In Grade 5, Abby storied a lot of the children in that classroom were of Asian ancestries which, she thought, might have been the reason "why nobody was really that racist." Although Abby explored Grade 6 as a year where the girls, in particular, "turned really mean and racist," she did not make their ancestries visible. McIntosh (1989) highlighted, "many, perhaps most, white students in the US … do not see 'Whiteness' as a racial identity" (p. 12). I wondered, as Abby attended a school where people were "mostly White," if she and her classmates had learned to not name Whiteness. Might, then, Abby have learned to describe herself as "half Asian" because she had come to understand her Eurocanadian ancestry as invisible and as outside a racial

identity? For example, was she, and were her classmates, shaped to believe that only those people who were visibly not White had a racial identity? In this way, then, had Abby learned to name herself as "half Asian" because her Asian ancestry was visible and in that way she did or could have a racial identity?

In another story Abby told she highlighted that often when people meet her they "think I'm Spanish.... They're like, 'So you're Spanish right, because you really look Spanish.' I'm like, 'No, I'm half Chinese and then the other half's like all this other stuff'" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation with Abby, March 2004). Through Abby's initial interactions with others, she seemed to learn that she appeared non-White and non-Chinese. But, while she could name her Chinese ancestry she seemed to be without a way to describe or to name "the other half" of her ancestry. As Jake, Abby's dad, told stories of his childhood and youth in Hong Kong, he described how he "had a very strong Chinese identity" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, November 2004). Might Abby have felt comfortable naming her Chinese ancestry because of her dad's explorations of his Chinese identity? In a similar way, then, I wondered why Abby stumbled to explain Suzie's, her mom's, Eurocanadian ancestry.[27] Might it have been from intergenerational family stories and possible silences within some of her family stories that Abby learned to respond, "I'm half Chinese and then the other half's like all this other stuff?"

As I continued to think about what might have been Abby's understandings of her racial identity threads, I also wondered if Abby had learned to link racial identity with culture as was foregrounded in the previous story strand where she described her

[27] Because I did not engage in research conversations with Suzie I do not know how she might have explored her racial identity.

classmates as not having culture. Might this connection explain why Abby seemed to see herself as having culture while she saw the other "mostly White" population of children in the school as "ha[ving] no culture?" Intrigued by what might have led Abby to think in this way, I looked at Alberta's Grades 1-6 Program of Studies for Social Studies (Alberta Education, 1985)[28] which had been the mandate when Abby was in elementary school. In this document, learning outcomes around concepts of traditions, customs, culture and celebrations seemed fixed and singular in studies such as: special communities within Alberta and/or Canada (examples of special communities included Inuit, Hutterite, Ukrainian, Métis, and Chinese); a comparative study between Alberta and Quebec; and, similarities and differences between Canada and China. Reading this document I was reminded of Britzman's, Santiago-Válles', Jiménez-Múñoz's & Lamash's (1993) explorations into how culture can be portrayed as "a seamless parade of stable and unitary customs and traditions" and where the "knowledge that scaffold[ed] this view shut out the controversies of how any knowledge—including multicultural—is constructed, mediated, governed, and implicated in forms of social regulation and normalization" (p. 189). I wondered, as Abby engaged with such representations, had she come to understand culture as "celebrations of holidays, heros, ethic festivals and food fairs" (Duesterberg, 1998, p. 497). If so, did it make sense, then, that if Abby saw people who were White as outside of racial identity that they would also be outside of, or without, culture?

Continuing to ponder what Abby seemed to be showing in the story threads interwoven within this strand of her identity making, I was reminded of what many

[28] I recognize representations and understandings of culture are woven into all subject matter taught in schools, but as an elementary and secondary student it was in Social Studies that the study of, or into, culture was made most visible.

researchers (Delpit, 2000; Hicks, 2005; Paley, 1979; Sleeter, 1993; Thompson, 1998) have noted about the prevalence of a "colorblind" philosophy in schools, particularly elementary schools[29]. Tenorio (2000) expressed:

> In my 20 years of teaching I have learned that, contrary to what adults often believe, young children are not "colorblind." Instead, they have an unstated but nonetheless sophisticated understanding of issues of race and power. ... Dealing with issues of race is perhaps the most complicated problem I have encountered as a kindergarten teacher. For many years, the problem didn't seem to "exist," and was glossed over as part of the view that "all children are the same, black, white or brown." (p. 24)

As I thought about Abby naming herself as "half Asian" and, as well, stories she told of experiencing racism "because my dad work[ed] part time at a Native Reserve," I wondered was she making visible that she was not colorblind, that is, was she trying to tell me that while perhaps she saw her Eurocanadian ancestry as invisible, she was not colorblind to how she looked non-White. Might Abby have also been trying to tell me that she was aware of the interconnections between race and power? Had she, through her feelings of marginalization at Lakeside Elementary School, developed "an unstated but nonetheless sophisticated understanding of issues of race and power?"

Returning again to consider that Abby had not named the racial identities of the children who were "really mean and racist," I wondered, if these children were White, had Abby learned through her interactions with them that racism was something people who were White did to people who were non-White. If so, how might her coming to think

[29] Schick (2000) studied how pre-service teachers in a western Canadian university had difficulties naming their whiteness. They also struggled to inquire into ways their white racial identity shaped who they were and were becoming as teachers.

in this way have been shaped by, as Tenorio (2000) suggested, stories within Lakeside Elementary School whereby children were seen as colorblind and, therefore, issues of race were "glossed over?" If conversations of race and, as well, the connections between race and power were silent or silenced in Lakeside Elementary School, might Abby have learned to name herself as "half Asian" as a way to tell others that she was aware of racial differences and, more so, that she was not racist?

In addition to Abby's explorations of how she experienced children at Lakeside Elementary School, her words also provided insight into how she experienced those in positions of authority, namely the principal. For example, when Abby and her parents asked the principal to intervene in the racism and bullying Abby was experiencing, the principal, according to Abby, "wouldn't do anything" which made Abby and her parents angry. As I considered this story in Abby's unfolding life curriculum, alongside my knowledge that the principal was also White[30], I wondered how this experience may have further developed Abby's thinking that racism was something people who were White did to people who were non-White. I also wondered had the principal not responded, at least in a way that was visible to Abby and her parents, because doing so would have meant needing to acknowledge, perhaps both internally and externally, that children are not "colorblind" and that racism exists among them. In making this acknowledgement, might the principal have feared what it could mean in relationships with and among members of Lakeside Elementary School community, that is, children, families and staff members? Might he have also feared how he could become positioned in relation to dominant institutional and cultural plotlines existing within the school district and, as

[30] To learn the racial identity of the principal at Lakeside school during the timeframe when Abby was in Grade 6, I searched the school website.

well, in which the school district existed? For example, was he concerned that if he opened up this conversation about racism that his job would be placed in jeopardy?[31] Coming to these wonders, I was reminded of the warning or awareness in Trinh's (1989) words:

> Silence as a refusal to partake in the story does sometimes provide us with a means to gain a hearing. It is voice, a mode of uttering, and a response in its own right. Without other silences, however, my silence goes unheard, unnoticed; it is simply one voice less, or more point given to the silencers. (p. 83)

I wondered did the principal realize that by staying silent to the bullying and racism Abby was experiencing in the school, he was, in fact, giving "one … more point" to those living out stories of bullying and racism and, as well, to the continued societal perpetuation of these stories. And, did he know that his silence was, perhaps, shaping a story that at Lakeside Elementary School bullying and racism were not experiences attended to?

While Jake and I did not discuss this particular incident during our research conversations, the stories he shared helped me to imagine how he might have experienced the principal's silence in this situation.

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[31] Craig (2004) showed how the life and work of a principal, Henry Richards, became reshaped as she traced the bumping up of a policy focused on standardized achievement testing for accountability with a school story of culturally relevant learning and assessment at a large, economically and racially diverse high school in the United States. Through long-term participation in the school, Craig learned from teachers that Henry Richards was a principal who chose not to shy away from the "social turmoil" shaped by the changing demographics of the school but, instead, encouraged difference and activism. In part, it was Henry Richards living of these stories that shaped curriculum reform in the school, reform attentive to the lives and realities of the diverse youth. Yet, as Craig's story unfolded, when the schools' scores on the standardized achievement tests were lower than in previous years and the school was placed under surveillance by state authorities, Henry Richards, determined to hang onto his stories of honoring the lives, interests and needs of the youth in the school and, thereby, refusing to force teachers to shift toward teaching for the test, resigned from his position as principal.

Grew up in Hong Kong
Undiagnosed ADHD child
Psychology wasn't really that prevalent in Hong Kong at that time
So just chalked up to misbehavior, bad behavior
Didn't do well in school right from the get go
Was very aggressive child from young age

First memory of Kindergarten
Must be about three or four
First day
Can't remember what happened
Remember throwing a fit
Punch[ing] my Kindergarten teacher
Of course didn't do much damage
I was very young
Janitor/security guy called to control me
Locked up in this dark room
Remember mom coming to pick me up
Teacher had long talk with her
Mom got very mad at me
Remember feeling very unjustly treated

From bad to worse from that point on
Never developed any trust for teachers
Had no trust for school
Constant battle and fight
In my mind
Teachers
Verbally abusive
Emotionally not understanding
Mean to kids
Not understanding things [children and youth] are going through

Remember the day Abby started school
A real challenge
My own childhood resentment and feelings were just right there
Always more than ready to fight for Abby with the teacher
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, November 2004)

As Jake recalled his experiences in school, his stories showed me something of how he felt "unjustly treated" and how, over time, he came to see his teachers as "verbally abusive," "emotionally not understanding," "mean to kids" and as "not

understanding things that [children and youth] are going through." He also explored that in response to how he experienced school, as well as his "very tumultuous home[life]," he established himself "as somewhat of a bully" at a young age (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, November 2004). As I thought more about Abby's unfolding life curriculum in the midst of school and family stories embedded within cultural narratives, I imagined that when Jake experienced the principal of Lakeside Elementary as not responding to the racism and bullying Abby was experiencing in the school, it may have reconnected him across time and place to his "childhood resentment and feelings" of being "very unjustly treated" while also deepening the mistrust he felt for teachers and schools. How, I wondered, did Jake experience having his daughter return to school after the "principal wouldn't do anything" in response to the racism and bullying that Abby was experiencing. Did he worry that, like himself, Abby might respond by establishing herself "as somewhat of a bully?" Did he worry that, like himself, Abby might grow into adulthood carrying stories of mistrusting teachers and schools? In this way, was Jake concerned about the intergenerational continuance of these stories? Might Jake have also worried that this moment alongside other past and future experiences could lead Abby to leave school early in a similar way to how his experiences had layered onto each other and led him in Grade 12 to say, "to hell with school.... I'm going to quit.... I'm just going to work" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, November 2004)[32]. While Jake did eventually return to an educational institution and complete a degree in psychology, his stories revealed how leaving school early shaped and made difficult his getting into university. I imagine Jake did not wish for Abby to live similar difficult

[32] During the time Jake was a student in Hong Kong, students graduated high school upon successful completion of Grade 13.

stories and that it was, at least in part, from this place that he "was always more than ready to fight for Abby."

Continuing to think about stories Jake was telling, I saw a possible intergenerational interruption across the stories lived by Jake's mom and which Jake now lived as one of Abby's parents in relation to the interactions between parents and teachers. As Abby's parent, Jake seemed to draw on his childhood feelings of being "unjustly treated" when his mom "got very mad at … [him]" after the Kindergarten teacher's "long talk with her." For me, what Jake highlighted here was that his mom chose to listen to the teacher's story and not to his story. Recalling his feelings of this injustice, Jake seemed to commit to not living out this story as Abby's parent. Perhaps, I realized, this was what he was telling me when he said, "I became this over protective, over eager fighter for my daughter in making sure that what I experienced [in school] doesn't happen to her" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, November 2004).

Took acting courses at Prairie Theatre
Mom made me go
Could see people
in Lakeside Elementary School
were very narrow minded
Wanted me to make friends outside school

In theatre classes with junior high kids
Of course didn't make friends
People in junior high tend
not to be friends with people in elementary
I wasn't too fond of classes
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

During Grades 5 and 6 Abby began taking acting courses at Prairie Theatre. She did so, Abby storied, because her mom wanted her "to make friends outside of school." As I thought about how, according to Abby, Suzie saw "people in Lakeside Elementary School [as] … very narrow minded," I wondered what might

have lived behind her seeing people there in this way. Had she come to this understanding as she listened to Abby's tellings of her life at school or, like Abby, had Suzie also felt that there were "certain way[s]" to be whenever she entered onto the school landscape of Lakeside Elementary or when she received correspondence from the school such as classroom and school newsletters? Might she have encouraged or pushed Abby to make friends outside of school because, as a mother, she worried her daughter was at risk of becoming similarly "narrow minded?" Or, had Suzie sensed Abby shutting down her emotions as well as no longer talking about who she was and who she was becoming and, in response, was Suzie trying to interrupt these stories from shaping Abby's life possibilities? As Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) showed, when women fell into living out stories in which their knowing was silent, they were, as well, in jeopardy of becoming "socially, economically, and educationally deprived" (pp. 23-24). As a woman who had married a man from a non-dominant race and as a woman who had also lived through a divorce, I imagined that Suzie, not unlike Jake, did not wish for school to "get in the way of" (Furdyk, 2007) who Abby could become. Although I do not know because I did not engage in research conversations with Suzie, I was left wondering if Suzie, like Jake, was also living out stories of teaching Abby not to fear interrupting intergenerational family stories. While Jake seemed to be showing Abby that these intergenerational interruptions could push back against dominant school stories that silence the voices of children, Suzie seemed to be focused on teaching Abby that in the midst of interrupting, that is, in the midst of restorying (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998) earlier stories to live by, participating in activities away from the hurtful context could shape new possibilities, new stories to live by.

Parents divorced when I was seven
Lived with mom, lived with dad
Switching everyday
Kind of sucked

Mom and Dad close after divorce
Mom remarried
Step-dad became abusive
Things were bad
I kept everything to myself

Since step-dad's abuse
Mom and Dad aren't close
More complicated
(Interim research text based on transcripts of one-on-one research conversations, March & May 2004)

Many of the story threads Abby told also showed something of the shifting stories within her family. One of these stories was how she experienced her "family falling apart" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004). As Abby lived through these shifts, particularly when her step-dad became abusive which, in turn, seemed to Abby to sever and complicate the relationship between her parents, she explored that she withdrew and "kept everything to [her]self." Noting the timeframe of these family stories in relation to the stories Abby was living in school helped me to better understand other stories Abby shared during our research conversations of becoming "self destructive," a process she described as "hurting myself" as a way to lessen her feelings of not being able to express the tensions she felt (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March & May 2004). Returning to my image of a rope as a way to visually represent and texturally describe my understandings of Abby, I was reminded that as tension is applied onto a rope the strands wind more tightly together and, in so doing, their combining strength makes the rope stronger. Yet, when the tension becomes more than the strength of the rope can bear, the strands can begin to snap, one by one. With the breaking of each strand, the rope becomes increasingly fragile and less able to withstand tension. Was it in a similar way, then, that as Abby experienced tension, the strands of her life wound together more tightly and in their combining gave her strength? However, as the tensions across her life increased, and she kept everything to herself, did she feel

strands of her life snapping one by one and, in this way, that her self was becoming increasing fragile? Was it, I wondered, from this place that Abby became self destructive because it gave her a way to "focus more on the physical pain instead of the emotional pain" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004)?

Initially when Abby shared these stories of self destruction with me I found them difficult to listen to and, in a similar way, I struggled with, first, if and then how, to include them in my research text. But, in the writing of this text, I have come to understand how significant these stories were and are in that they make visible Abby's courage. In my masters work (2000), as I inquired into my identity and how disappointments and painful experiences I lived as a teacher shaped, and were shaping, who I was and who I was becoming, I came to more complex understandings of courage.

> Some say courage is a kind of brave fearlessness. I say that courage is a kind of inner understanding that comes with knowing ourselves, across time and place—for me, it is knowing that is profoundly narrative, and, in my experience, emerges from within spaces of relation with other storytellers. It is a kind of meaning that as Anzuldúa (1987) wrote, leads us continuously forward as we work to compose stories of becoming. (p. 28)

Made visible in my words, I saw, and continue to see, courage as "emerg[ing] within spaces of relation." Returning again to Abby's words, shared in the word image which begins this chapter, I heard her telling me something similar. That is, as relationships developed and deepened between and among Abby and others involved in *Who Has Seen The Wind*, Abby seemed to grow in her courage to risk sharing more and more of herself and reconnecting further and further with her emotions. As she did so, it seemed Abby

began to restory who she was and who she *could* become. As I came to these realizations, I turned back to wonder about my courage and, as a narrative inquirer, why I had considered omitting these stories from my research text. Necessarily, I asked myself many hard questions about my responsibilities to Abby and her family. I also asked myself hard questions about the trust Abby placed in me as she shared these and others stories of her unfolding life. It mattered to me that I wrote well enough to show the spirit that seemed to me to live in Abby's tellings of her experiences. Her words did not carry blame or judgment but, rather, and perhaps in a similar way to how I storied disappointments and painful experiences I lived as a teacher, Abby seemed engaged in processes of "mak[ing] meaning" out of her painful experiences and disappointments, and in so doing, was "becoming more of who … [she was]" (Anzuldúa, 1987, p. 46).

As I thought more about Abby as a youth learning to live stories of "becoming more of who … [she was]," I was drawn to think more about how Abby's parents seemed to be teaching her about interrupting both intergenerational family stories as well as school stories. Although I have often returned to and thought about Bateson's (1990) words in relation with my life composition, that is, "Today, the materials and skills from which a life is composed are no longer clear. It is no longer possible to follow the paths of previous generations," (p. 2) I saw that her ideas also spoke to Abby's unfolding life curriculum, particularly to the stories Suzie and Jake were living with her.

I just wanted a brand new start

End of Grade 6
Visited Princess Anne
Mom wanted me to go there
Knew people could be gay and lesbian
But wasn't exposed to it
Thought it's wrong
Like a cultural shock

School absolutely filthy
Maybe once a week the floor gets mopped
Washrooms dirty, smelled
Lockers disgusting
Like a cultural shock

Said to mom
"Isn't right for me"
"Don't want to go"

Did my research
Asking [peers] at elementary school
where they were going for junior high
Nobody said River's Edge

So we checked it out
Parents heard it was a really good school
I thought it was an okay school since nobody
from Lakeside was coming here
I just wanted a brand new start

River's Edge
A lot different than elementary school
Students, staff here more modest, kinder
Welcome you
Have a problem, people will help you
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

Although Abby did not explore why Suzie wanted her to attend Princess Anne School for junior high, the story threads interwoven in this strand made visible that Abby respected her mom's wishes and went with her to visit the school. Yet, while Abby was seeking a school where she could have "a brand new start," it seemed she was not prepared for what this looked like during her visit to Princess Anne. For Abby, life in this school was "like a cultural shock" as it bumped against both what was familiar to her as well as what she believed. Unlike Abby's earlier descriptions of the experiences that shaped her life at Lakeside, the physical place of Princess Anne appeared "absolutely filthy." As well, seeing youth who Abby perceived as "gay and lesbian" rubbed against what Abby had learned was acceptable at her elementary school and in her family. In another research conversation, Abby explained:

> When it comes to people who are gay, [my dad] thinks that's wrong. He has no problem with me thinking that it's okay for people to be gay. He just thinks it's gross when he sees a guy, it's not like he thinks it's wrong, it's just that he cringes when he sees a guy and a guy holding hands or kissing. (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004)

Having this experience at Princess Anne as well as a space with her parents where Abby could say that it was not the right school for her, Abby seemed to take more agency as she began to "research" finding a school that could be right for her even though doing so bumped against school district policy which expected her to attend her neighborhood school. Abby made visible she knew this policy when she said, "I'm … supposed to go to … school … in my area" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004). Finding River's Edge, a school which satisfied her parents' criteria of being a "good school" as well as her own criteria in that "nobody from Lakeside was coming here," Abby storied her parents as supporting her interest in River's Edge School. For Abby, I imagined this family decision might have meant "a brand new start" in multiple ways.

Beginning at River's Edge Abby experienced students and staff as "more modest," "kinder" and "welcom[ing]." Unlike at Lakeside Elementary School where Abby experienced others as turning away from and, at times, silencing tensions she was facing, at River's Edge she found "people willing to help [her]." Still, as Abby recalled her beginnings at River's Edge she said, "The transition between elementary school to any junior high is not an easy transition" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004).

It was during Grade 7 that Abby participated in *Who Has Seen The Wind*. For this reason, I now turn to the stories Abby shared of composing her life after this life "changing," life "saving" experience.

Stories Of Life As Lived After *Who Has Seen The Wind*

Grade 8
My shining year
Best year for friends
Grades were always good
Had a problem
Teacher and vice principal helped me
and my family work through it
In elementary they wouldn't have cared

At River's Edge
You can be different
Much more open minded than elementary
Still, narrow minded
If a little more different
Or express yourself in different ways
An outcast

Racism definitely goes on
But not as bad
I don't notice it a lot
Nobody does it against me
Remember Grade 7 or 8
Asian kid being extremely teased
He went to a teacher
Teacher went to principal
All got solved
Kids got suspended
Pretty severe when somebody does that
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

As Abby recalled stories of her earlier experiences in junior high, from her position of being part way through Grade 9, she explored Grade 8 as her "shining year." By this time, Abby storied, she had friends both in school and at Prairie Theatre with whom she felt able to share her feelings as she explored stories of who she was and who she was becoming. Interwoven within stories of relationships with peers and teachers, Abby also told stories of how her "grades were always good" and that when problems arose in either her life or in other peers' lives, teachers and administrators at River's Edge responded in ways that demonstrated they were listening and that they cared. Yet, while Abby experienced peers and staff at River's Edge as "much more open minded" than at Lakeside Elementary School, her stories revealed she still felt "narrow minded[ness]" surrounding her. For example, Abby

highlighted, "if you're a little bit more different or your express yourself in different ways, you're still an outcast here." Similarly, while racism was "not as bad" as at Lakeside Elementary School and Abby did not "notice it a lot" because "nobody … [was doing] it against [her], she knew it was "definitely go[ing] on."

Throughout Abby's and my research conversations, Abby repeatedly told me stories that demonstrated she saw River's Edge as an "awesome school" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004) where "things … [were] great for [her]" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, May 2004). Yet, as I slowed down and read more carefully across the transcripts of our conversations, I began to notice a thread emerging in Abby's stories of River's Edge School, a thread which had not seemed to be present in the stories she told of Lakeside Elementary School. For me, Abby highlighted this new thread during our conversation about racism existing at River's Edge and how she had been called "Chink … maybe twice at this school." She said:

> Of course every school has their bad people…. Every school has their people who deal drugs, who own armed weapons and everything. But every school has that. You can't prevent that. No school can prevent the kind of people that come there" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004).

Attending to what Abby seemed to be saying, that is, that stories of racism, drugs, violence, fear, and so on resulted from "bad people" and since schools could not "prevent the kind of people" who attended, I wondered was Abby coming to see these stories as reified realities within all schools. Were Abby's expectations of what schools were, and what they could be, shifting over time and across school landscapes? Was she telling me that she was coming to see herself as well as others on school landscapes as powerless to

shift these stories? If so, might Abby's thinking in this way have begun at Lakeside Elementary School when the "principal wouldn't do anything" in response to the bullying and racism she was experiencing. While at the time Abby storied the principal's lack of response made "[her] and … [her] family pretty mad," I wondered if over time and place this experience had come to also hold alternative understandings for her. That is, had Abby come to understand that the principal had not responded because, even though he held the highest position of authority in the school, he was powerless against these stories? In a similar way, then, in either Grade 7 or 8 when Abby saw a teacher at River's Edge, who also held a position of authority, not directly respond but, rather, go to the principal about the "extreme teas[ing]" an "Asian kid" was experiencing, had Abby learned that teachers were powerless against these stories? While in this particular incident, students who had been living out the stories of extreme teasing were suspended which may have, at least for a time, "solved" or prevented the continuance of these stories, might Abby have learned that since racism was still going on and was part of students' lives at River's Edge that responding in this way did little in reshaping these stories?

Didn't realize until at River's Edge
Where things are so much more real
At Lakeside Elementary trying to mold us
to be certain people

I guess probably, maybe subconsciously
Taught us
Things that were different were wrong
Even though they aren't
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

Experiencing people and school stories at River's Edge as "so much more real" made visible to Abby how she and her peers were being "mold[ed] … to be certain people" at Lakeside. Amidst her stories of relationships, Abby also told stories about

how processes of learning she was engaging in at River's Edge were different than those she experienced at Lakeside Elementary School. Abby explored these differences in the following transcript fragment:

> Like here [at River's Edge] my Social teacher teaches us you know terrorism is wrong and we know that because killing is wrong. You learn that at a very young age but you learn all these things that are wrong. But, now, you go more in-depth in subjects. Like in Language Arts or Social we go into homosexuality and into violence, why some people do the things that they do that are violent. And you learn that some things are okay. Like it's never okay to shoot somebody but you learn to think more in their mind as to why they did that, as opposed to being like, "You know this is wrong. Doing this is wrong." (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

As Abby reflected on her learning in Social and Language Arts, she showed how engaging in processes of inquiry turned her learning both inward and outward, that is, looking inward Abby became aware of perceptions and opinions she held and looking outward she heard others' perspectives and positionings. Laying differing points of view "yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side" and "learning by letting them speak to one another" (Bateson, 1994, p. 14), Abby came to more "in-depth" understandings of diverse "subjects." Engaging in these "so much more real" processes of learning as well as the more "in depth" relationships with others called forward and supported within these inquiry processes, seemed to awaken Abby to how at Lakeside school she was taught to see issues as either right or wrong and, as well, that "things that were different were wrong." As I thought about what Abby seemed to be saying about

being taught to see and to experience the world in terms of binary opposites at Lakeside Elementary School, I was reminded of Belenky's et al (1986) explorations into "women's ways of knowing." They wrote, "For those who adhere to the perspective of received knowledge, there are no gradations of the truth. Paradox is inconceivable because received knowers believe several contradictory ideas are never simultaneously in accordance with fact" (p. 41). Thinking further about how, for Abby, there seemed to be "no gradations of the truth—no gray areas" in what teachers taught or how situations were responded to at Lakeside Elementary School, I was reminded that women who lived by stories of received knowing in Belenky's et al study saw knowledge as coming from outside themselves and given to them by others, particular those in positions of authority. As I laid what I was hearing Abby say alongside Belenky's et al research, I was drawn to questions of why teachers might teach children to be received knowers. Perhaps, as Abby suggested, it was "probably, maybe subconsciously." Still, I could not help but wonder if there might also be alternative possibilities.

Considering further what Belenky et al (1986) showed about women's diverse ways of knowing helped me to understand that when teachers live by stories of being *the* holders of knowledge with *the* power to give their knowledge or not, children will often become more compliant to doing and thinking as the teacher expects of them. Perhaps, then, teachers at Lakeside Elementary School were, at least somewhat more consciously than Abby suggested, living stories in which Abby and her peers were situated as received knowers so that they would be more compliant and easier to control. Thinking about why teachers might want compliant, easy to control children, I was reminded of "the pervasiveness of the dominant story of school that demands teachers demonstrate

their competency by being the one in control, that is, by taking [on and living out] their traditional, hierarchical position of being the singular authority in the classroom" (Clandinin et al, 2006, p. 94). Yet, while as a teacher I knew well the pervasiveness of this dominant story and, as well, at times the cost in my life of not living within its boundaries, I wondered what the cost might be to children caught within this story in schools. More specifically, I wondered, how being positioned as a received knower over time might have shaped Abby's unfolding identity and, therefore, the life curriculum she could see for herself.

Listening closely to the shifting voices of one hundred girls over a ten year period, Brown and Gilligan (1992) showed "adolescence … [was] a time of disconnection" and that it was "at this developmental junction, … [they] observed girls struggling over speaking and not speaking, knowing and not knowing, feeling and not feeling" (p. 4). Attending to the "inner division" girls experience as they enter into adolescence, Brown and Gilligan helped me to understand from a psychological perspective that this inner division emerges as girls find themselves in the midst of competing stories. That is, they documented girls felt forced to choose between hanging onto their voices and thereby risking being labeled as "'selfish' or 'rude' or 'mean' " (p. 217) or, conforming to family, societal and cultural pressures to "take themselves out of relationship with themselves" (p. 216) and silence their voices so that they could be seen as "good little girls" (p. 221).

Laying these psychological understandings alongside my and others' narrative understandings of identity making (Carr, 1986; Clandinin et al, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Greene, 1993, 1995; Huber & Keats Whelan, 2001) drew me again to

wonder about Abby's stories of self-destruction. Listening closely to what Abby seemed to be telling me, I recognized, at least in part, that what she was saying was that her inner struggles, struggles which led her toward living out of stories of self destruction, were not composed as the result of a single event or specific events coming together. Rather, Abby was showing me that during her years at Lakeside Elementary School she was gradually taking on stories given to her by others, particularly those who held authority over her on this landscape, and, in so doing, was being given an identity. Coming to this understanding I realized something more about why Abby would have needed to shut down her emotions and silence more and more of her self, stories her words made visible in the word image which begins this narrative account. At the same time as learning in school to take on received stories, Abby was also showing me that her parents were teaching her to interrupt such stories and live stories of having "inner authority" (Belenky et al, 1986). As I came to see these contradictions between stories Abby was learning in school and in her family, I realized, then, Abby was showing me she had been caught between conflicting school stories and family stories.

Hogan (1995) helped me to further understand conflicting stories through her inquiry into "two competing stories of professional development" (p. 111) which emerged as teachers on one school landscape engaged in differentiated professional development. In Hogan's story, some teachers continued to adhere to the dominant story of professional development as delivered onto them by outside experts while a smaller number of other teachers lived out a story of professional development where they told, inquired into and learned from their and each others' stories of lived teacher practices. The second or "competing story," Hogan wrote, "was tolerated for a time but it

eventually turned into a conflicting story and moral justifications were used to have everyone return to the dominant story" (p. 116). As the competing story of professional development was shut down, teachers who had been a part of this story found themselves standing at the crossroad of choosing to either conform to the dominant story, even though it was not a story which fit for them, or to leave the school. Taking, then, what Hogan showed me about conflicting stories to what Abby seemed to be telling me, I realized that she, too, could not simultaneously live conflicting stories. Abby could not take on received stories given to her at Lakeside Elementary School while also living stories of interrupting these school stories and of having "narrative authority" (Olson, 1995) over her own stories to live by. I recognized it was, perhaps, as Abby felt herself caught between conflicting school and family stories that she began to "[keep] everything to [her]self" and engage in stories of self-destruction. In this way, then, I better understood what perhaps Abby was saying when she explained, "hurting [her]self" let her "focus more on the physical pain instead of the emotional pain."

Saturday
My happy day
All day at theatre
Teaching, taking acting classes
2½ hours non-stop
Doing what I love

Be as weird as you want
Be as gay or lesbian as you want
Dress the way you want
Look the way you want
Kids a lot more accepting
Won't talk behind your back
Feel free

A completely open environment
Doing what you love to do
Don't have to learn Social[33] *and everything*
Don't have to ask to use washroom or anything
Just leave and come back when ready
Teacher
Can get mad
But, pretty accepting
Easy going

Can't even begin to explain it
It's just you're filled with this feeling inside
You're accepted
Be who you are
You feel free
Accepted
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

Telling stories of her experiences at Prairie Theatre, Abby explored how it was a "completely open environment" where she was filled with feeling "accepted" and "free" to be who she was and who she wanted to become. Not Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday, but Saturday was Abby's "happy day." Saturday was happy, Abby highlighted, because she spent it doing what she loved—teaching an acting class to a group of young children and taking an acting class with other youth—in an environment where she was filled with feelings of being "accepted" and "free" to be who she was and who she was becoming. Trying to listen hard to what Abby was telling me about how her experiences at Prairie Theatre felt different than other contexts in which she lived on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and

[33] In March, as Abby and I talked about her experiences at River's Edge, she said, "Social bores me to tears.... My teacher makes it a little better. He's awesome but I still hate it" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004). Later in the school year, and after Abby's Social teacher left due to illness, she told me "I don't need Social ... because [in the] ... careers that I'm thinking about, not in one single one, do I need anything to do with Social (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, June 2004).

Sundays, I was drawn to think about continuities and discontinuities in her experiences between and among these contexts.

River's Edge, where Abby spent much of Monday through Friday, felt "much more real" to Abby than Lakeside Elementary School as students and staff were "more modest," "kinder," "welcom[ing]," "help[ful]," and "car[ing]." As well in this context, Abby felt encouraged and supported to inquire into "subjects" in "more in-depth" ways which led her to increasingly complex understandings and deeper relationships with herself and others. As I considered these stories, I saw them as continuous with what Abby experienced at Prairie Theatre. But River's Edge was also a place where Abby faced "narrow minded[ness]," knew "racism [was] definitely go[ing] on," and, as well, was required to take courses which "bore[d her] … her to tears" and which she saw as irrelevant to what mattered to her as well as to the careers she imagined in her future. These stories, it seemed to me, were discontinuous with what Abby experienced at Prairie Theatre because there Abby felt stories of "be as weird" and "as gay or lesbian as you want" and of "dress" and "look the way you want" without risking others talking behind your back. Unlike at River's Edge, Prairie Theatre was a place where Abby had authority to make decisions and where she saw what she was doing and learning as supporting her dreams of becoming a professional actress and so much more.

Another context made visible in Abby's storytelling was her family context. In this context, Jake and Suzie lived stories with Abby of having narrative authority and being who she was and who she was becoming even when doing so meant interrupting family stories embedded within cultural narratives. While this story felt continuous with what Abby experienced at Prairie Theatre, what seemed discontinuous between these

contexts were tensions among participants. In Prairie Theatre everyone could be as they wanted without risk of anyone talking behind others' backs whereas Abby's family relationships were "complicated" and, at times, she seemed caught in tensions between Suzie and Jake.

Noting continuities and discontinuities across contexts in Abby's life, and thinking again about how she storied her experiences in the theatre as pivotal in her identity making, I wondered, might stories Abby was learning to live by in Prairie Theatre have reverberated (Huber, Huber, & Clandinin, 2004) into the other contexts. If so, did the reverberations shift who she was and who she was becoming at River's Edge and in her family? Was this what Abby was telling me in the following story fragment as she explored how, in Grade 9, she became a "cross between" social cliques at River's Edge?

> The only problem with River's Edge … is there's too many cliques. Like there's the most popular group, there's the losers, or people who other people consider to be losers, and there's all these in-between groups…. And, then, there's … guys [in an in-between group] … who try to be like these people [in the popular group] and they can't. There's probably at least ten suicidal people in each grade…. One of the reasons why they're suicidal is probably because they're not part of the popular group or the popular group teases them. I mean for some people they don't have to be popular but then once those guys [in the popular group] start teasing you it just gets really bad.
>
> In Grade 8 I was in the popular group and this year I'm like a cross between that and … the in-between groups…. I've learned that when I express

> myself people [in the popular group] get mad at me for doing what I love to do when that's not right. I find that the popular people are more concerned with guys, with looks, with exactly how to act in order to make guys like the way you look and the way you are. And yeah, I see lots of discrimination between people who are bigger and people who are skinnier…. From what I see, from what I heard when I was part of that [popular] group, um, it actually, it's disgusting actually sometimes some of the things that make someone a loser…. And I think that's really horrible how people do that…. It's not right but that's the way it is in junior high. That's why I don't like it…. Um it's definitely hard to come out of a popular category…. It's really hard to find where you fit in a school environment. It's really hard. (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, March 2004)

In this story fragment Abby's showed me she initially negotiated membership in the "popular group" at River's Edge. This clique, as Abby made visible, holds the top position in the social structure among youth with the power to define, often based on physical characteristics, who can be in, who is out, which students are "losers," and so on (Barnes, 2005). Being a part of this clique Abby felt pressure to live by stories of being "concerned with guys, with looks, with how to act in order to make guys like the way you look and the way you are" and of not expressing herself in ways she wanted because doing so made others in the group mad at her. While Abby knew the risks of "com[ing] out of [the] … popular category," she also showed me that one way her experiences in Prairie Theatre reverberated into her life at River's Edge was that she became a "cross between" groups. I imagine that Abby's living out of this re-positioning was shaped by her experiences of feeling "free" to be as different as she wanted to be yet still "accepted"

at Prairie Theatre. In this reverberation, then, it seemed Abby experienced greater continuity between school and the theatre.

In a similar way, I saw stories Abby composed of who she was and who she could be through her involvement in Prairie Theatre also reverberating in her family contexts. Different from the reverberation at River's Edge, the reverberation in Abby's family life seemed to shape the identity making of someone other than her self, that is, her dad's identity making. Jake highlighted this reshaping for me when he said:

> I'm always more than ready to fight for Abby with the teacher. And, you know, because in my mind teachers are just nasty people.... But, now I've changed because, I mean she has taught me, you know looking at her teacher and seeing that she had fun and that she can like her teacher. (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, November 2004)

Coming to see how Abby's experiences in the theatre were reverberating in her school and family contexts, I came to deeper understandings of who Abby was, who she was becoming and possibilities her future could hold. I also came to more complex understandings of what Abby was telling me when she storied how acting in *Who Has Seen The Wind* "changed" and "saved ... [her] life."

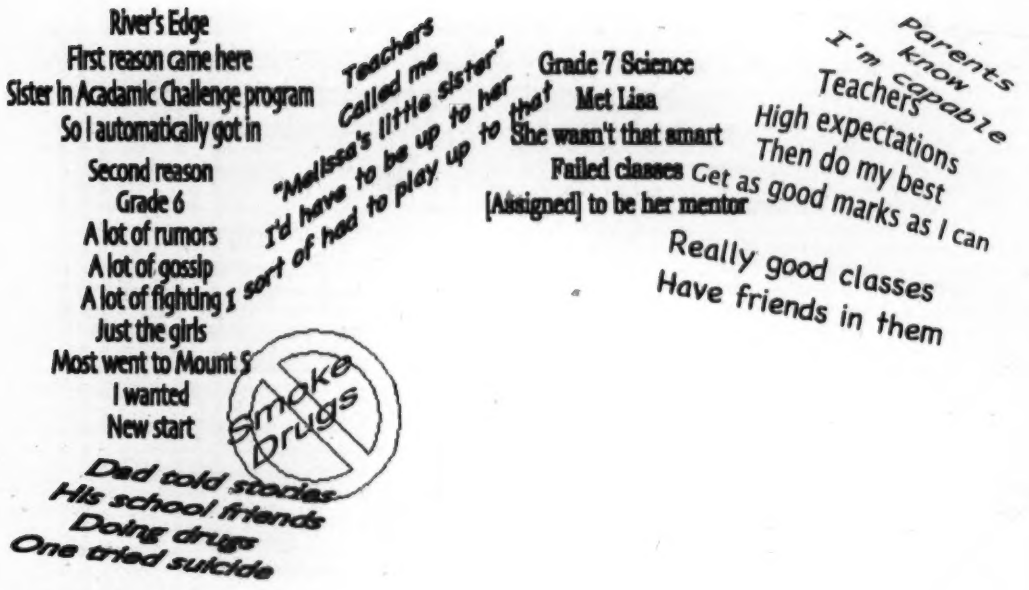
Chapter Five: Troubling An Intergenerational Story Of "Good" Student

Reading across transcripts of Tessa's and my research conversations, I initially read attentive to finding a moment that would become a place from which to begin this narrative account. It was not that I was searching for a particular kind of moment, but instead one that brought forward feelings within me that compelled me to want to tell, inquire into and gain understandings from it (Smit, 2007). Yet, as I read, it was not to a particular moment that I was drawn but, rather, to how:

> Storylines … combine[d] to make up larger stories; or, unrelated, they … [seemed to] criss-cross and interrupt one another, sometimes hindering and sometimes contributing to one another's progress. Elements of one … [seemed to] be elements in another … by accident or design. (Carr, 1986, p. 98)

Noting how, at times, stories Tessa told seemed to "combine to make up larger stories" whereas, at other times, seemed to "criss-cross and interrupt one another," I wondered what I might learn about who Tessa was and who she was becoming by attending to intersections, disruptions, gaps and silences that seemed to be between and among story fragments she told. What might attending in this way teach me about continuities and discontinuities Tessa experienced between family and school stories and, as well, how these stories were embedded within dominant institutional and cultural narratives? What might it show me about the unfolding life curriculum Tessa was composing and that, perhaps at times, was being constructed for her? It was in this way, then, that I was drawn to composing an identity image, an image which made visible Tessa's unfolding identity making.

Beginnings Of An Identity Image



(Interim research text based on transcripts of one-on-one research conversations, September & October 2004)

Exploring with me why she had come to River's Edge for junior high, Tessa highlighted two reasons. Although Mount S was the junior high school to which she was zoned[34], Tessa could attend River's Edge because Melissa, her older sister, was already there as a Grade 9 student in the Academic Challenge program[35]. As well, Tessa did not want to attend Mount S as it was this school that many girls from her Grade 6 classroom planned to attend Grade 7. Grade 6, Tessa storied, was a year with "big problems, there was like a lot of rumors going around, a lot of gossip, a lot of fighting with like just the

[34] Students must attend their neighborhood school in the school district where River's Edge is located unless the school cannot meet a student's needs or the school is filled to the optimum enrollment limit.
[35] According to school district website, "a sibling of a student already in attendance at a school shall be permitted to enrol in the same school if both siblings will be enrolled in the school at the same time" (reference of website withheld to ensure participants' anonymity).

girls" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). Tessa wanted a new start and she saw River's Edge as holding this possibility.

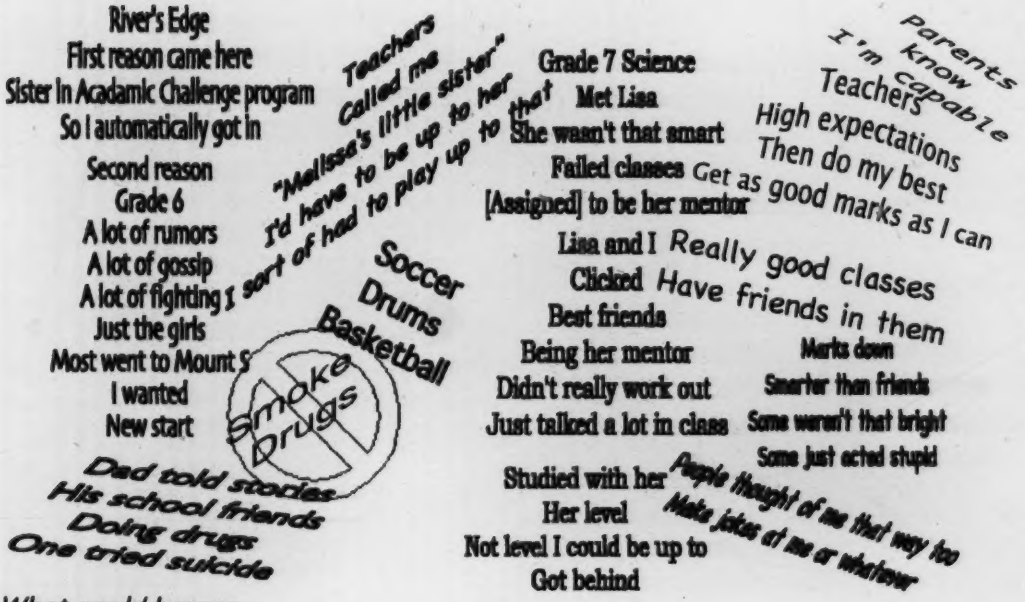
Yet, while Tessa imagined River's Edge as a place where she could leave behind old stories and start anew, she quickly learned she was not story-less or without stories on this new landscape. From the outset, teachers at River's Edge referred to her as "Melissa's little sister" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, October 2004) which she quickly discovered carried within it certain expectations. For example, at the beginning of Grade 7 Science, Mr. Cooper assigned Tessa to mentor Lisa, a student who was seen "as not as smart." Living out this story, Mr. Cooper showed Tessa that his story of her was that she was smart and a model to be followed by students who needed to improve their grades (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). Given that Tessa was new to the school, she knew she was assigned this mentorship role because she was Melissa's little sister. Because Melissa was in the Academic Challenge program and, therefore, must be smart, Tessa, as the little sister, must also be smart in the same ways.

Perhaps in a similar way to how stories pre-existed for Tessa at River's Edge, she, too, brought stories with her about the school. Recalling conversations with Melissa prior to Tessa beginning Grade 7, Tessa explained that Melissa had storied River's Edge as "way funner than elementary … kids are so different … people you meet are way, really nice." Melissa's stories of River's Edge fit well for Tessa, particularly in relation to her story that "really good classes have friends in them" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). As well, from attending River's Edge Open House, Tessa had stories that "academically, its sort of the top thing that River's Edge is at" and "sports

is also pretty high" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). From these stories, Tessa saw River's Edge as a place where she would be able to live out the story her parents had of her, that is, that she was "capable." She felt confident in being able to live out this story because when teachers have "high expectations then I work to my best and I will get as good a marks as I can" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004) and, for River's Edge to be academically top, teachers must have high expectations of students. As well, River's Edge would be a place where Tessa could live her passions for playing sports, as this story about the school was also "pretty high." This story also fit nicely with Anne's and John's (Tessa's mom and dad) desires for Tessa be involved in sports. In a research conversation with Anne, she explained her and John's beliefs around the importance of children and youth being involved in sports. She said, "if we keep kids in sports it's going to decrease the strain on health care as they get older.... Not as many obese kids, they'll be in better shape.... Also decrease on the judicial system because if you're involved in sports you already belong to a gang, a sports gang, and you hang out with those groups of kids and you're busy with them and you don't have a lot of time to get into trouble" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, December 2004). The stories Tessa had, then, of River's Edge also fit well with other stories she carried. One was that smoking and doing drugs were activities in which she would not participate. She saw taking up smoking and drugs as incompatible to playing sports and from her dad she knew doing drugs could set youth onto a life path which possibly ended in suicide (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). River's Edge, it seemed, was a school filled with much

possibility for Tessa, a place where her stories to live by seemed to be elements of school stories and school stories seemed to be elements of her stories to live by.

Identity Image Grows: Deepening My Understandings



(Interim research text based on transcripts of one-on-one research conversations, September & October 2004)

Taking up the assigned role of mentor meant Tessa and Lisa sat together during Science and that they studied together. The two girls "just clicked" and quickly became "best friends" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). Having friends in class was important to Tessa as she storied herself, as well as that often she was

described by preschool and elementary teachers, as "talkative" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, October 2004). Seeing herself as talkative fit well with her story that "really good classes have friends in them"—to be talkative Tessa needed to be with friends.

However, as Tessa's year in Grade 7 unfolded, her and Lisa's working together and deepening friendship did not lead to improved marks for Lisa. Instead, because the girls "just talked a lot in class" and studied to Lisa's "level" rather than to a level that Tessa saw herself as capable of, Tessa got behind and her marks went down. In addition, Tessa also "hung out with" other Grade 7 students who "weren't that bright" or "just acted stupid." Even though Tessa knew she could "get a good mark … all the time, I just don't. I don't study." Reflecting further on the downward spiraling of her marks in Grade 7 she explained, "I think it was because of those people I hung out with last year, it sort of did get my marks down…. If I'd get a good mark, they'd be like 'Oh wow, Tessa actually did get a good mark and stuff'"(transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). Although Tessa understood herself as a capable student, and knew others also saw her in this way, and that she worked to her best when teachers had high expectations of her, she lived out a story of being like the people she was hanging out with which to her meant not caring about working toward marks which authentically portrayed her abilities.

Noting these story fragments side by side, I saw them as "criss-cross[ing] and interrupt[ing] one another … hindering … one another's progress" (Carr, 1986, p. 98). I wondered how Tessa experienced, and made sense of, living them alongside each other. Had she felt rubbings between and among them? Yet, recalling Tessa's and my

September 2004 conversation, and reading and re-reading the transcript of it, it did not seem in how Tessa told these story fragments or in how I responded at the time that either of us had experienced them as bumping against each other. I wondered might Tessa have experienced and understood the story fragments in a different way than how I was now seeing them.

"Liv[ing] Out Or Liv[ing] Up To" Expectations[36]

Staying with these seemingly criss-crossing story fragments, I began to wonder what Tessa meant when she said she "sort of had to play up to" expectations teachers held for her. Was she seeing herself as engaged in taking on a persona or character that teachers wanted or expected of her? Was she similarly playing up to expectations she felt her friends had of her, that is, to not achieve higher marks than them? Initially, I pushed away seeing Tessa in this way as it did not feel consistent with my memories of her and with the field notes I had written during my time in the Drama classroom. Recalling the interim research text in Chapter Two that I wrote to introduce Tessa, *Coming To Know Tessa*, I returned to it. Perhaps, looking again at stories I had of Tessa as our lives intertwined in the six-week Drama 7 course might provide me with a way to more broadly understand the contradictions I experienced between her told stories and my stories of her.

Laying the interim research text, *Coming To Know Tessa,* and my understandings from it, alongside story fragments Tessa shared during our research conversations of her declining marks in Science and her not wanting to achieve higher marks than Lisa and other friends, I wondered about the conflicts and gaps that seemed to live between our tellings. Had I been so unaware or asleep in the Drama classroom that I completely

[36] Quoted from Carr (1986, p. 96).

missed the stories Tessa was living? While I never discussed youths' marks with Mr. Ros, my field notes showed I came to think of Tessa as a youth who was fully engaged in learning the Drama subject matter and, as well, cared about doing work that would be considered academically strong. Rather than seeing her as *adjusting downward* to others in the class, I saw her as being looked upon as a leader, and that she was comfortable within this role, as I watched her bring focus to group tasks and draw group members on-task. Why, I wondered, did story fragments Tessa told in our research conversations around not achieving to her abilities and not caring about her marks seem to live in opposition to my understandings of her while other story fragments we told seemed aligned. Stories that seemed to run across both our tellings were that Tessa liked classes when they were fun and when she had friends in them as well as that she enjoyed talking and sometimes did so when she was expected to be doing otherwise. Unwilling to simply accept that I had been completely inattentive to stories Tessa was living during our time together in the Drama classroom, I wondered might I have seen Tessa in different ways, ways that more closely matched her story fragments, if our lives had intersected in the Science classroom.

Reconsidering my student and teacher experiences, and how teacher expectations can draw forward differing stories to live by from students, I was reminded of Delpit's (1995) explorations into education in a multicultural society. In this work, Delpit inquired into how teachers' beliefs and stereotypes around students' cultural differences, socioeconomic status, family configurations, and abilities can shape their interactions and teaching practices. She suggested, "If teachers are to teach effectively, recognition of the importance of student perception of teacher intent is critical" (p. 168). Were the

contradictions and gaps between Tessa's and my tellings, I wondered, emerging from Tessa's differing perceptions of Mr. Cooper's and Mr. Ros' expectations. Considering this possibility, I was drawn to field notes where I wrote about the first day of class in the Drama 7 and 9 courses I was part of from January to June 2004. I chose the following field note as a way to show something of Mr. Ros' and youths' lives meeting in the context of the Drama classroom.

> After welcoming the youth to Drama, Mr. Ros introduced himself and then explained he has three expectations—that youth respect themselves, each other and him. With each expectation, Mr. Ros talked a bit about what he meant and showed a few examples. Students laughed a lot as Mr. Ros demonstrated his acting talents through his exaggerated examples. Building upon these expectations, Mr. Ros talked about the kind of classroom he hoped that they would make together. He spoke about how sometimes in Drama things are funny but that it was important that everyone felt like they had a space where they could take risks and that no one would be laughing *at* anyone else, no one would be making anyone feel like they weren't doing as good a job as someone else and no one would be making someone feel stupid. Mr. Ros talked about how he hoped that they would put themselves out there and try things even though he realized doing so might push them to the edges of what they were comfortable with. He added that he saw pushing them past their comfort limits as part of his job but also recognized that people begin Drama courses in different places in terms of confidence, prior knowledge and skills, talents, and so on. Mr. Ros talked about how participating as well as a willingness to push themselves, and support others

to move, beyond their existing boundaries and limits mattered in the class (field note, January 27 2004).

While I imagined Tessa's declining marks were contrary to what Mr. Cooper expected of Melissa's little sister when he assigned her to mentor Lisa, Tessa's storytelling revealed he did not adjust his expectations as she got behind and her marks went down. Rather, Tessa continued to sit and work with Lisa in the Science classroom even though doing so seemed to have become a mis-educative experience (Dewey, 1938) for Tessa and, perhaps, Lisa as well as other youth in the class. In a similar way then, to how Tessa played up to and tried to fulfill expectations she felt from Mr. Cooper, it seemed she was doing the same in Drama. In this classroom, Mr. Ros made clear he understood "people begin Drama courses in different places in terms of confidence, prior knowledge and skills, talents, and so on" and that it was his expectation everyone would respect these differences. Living a story of respect, then, meant "no one would be laughing at anyone else, no one would be making anyone feel like they weren't doing as good a job as someone else and no one would be making someone feel stupid." As well, the Drama classroom was a place where Mr. Ros expected youth to "take risks" and "push themselves, and support others to move, beyond their existing boundaries and limits." As I thought again about my stories of Tessa made visible in Chapter Two, I came to see how Mr. Ros' expectations seemed reflective of the stories I saw Tessa as living during our time together in the Drama classroom. To me, when she came up with ideas, took a leadership role in group decision making and volunteered to present to the class instead of waiting to be instructed to do so as well as the ways she worked alongside classmates and contributed to whole class discussions, Tessa was working

toward fulfilling Mr. Ros' expectations that she take risks while pushing herself, and supporting others, in learning and that she respect her classmates' diversity in terms of confidence, prior knowledge and skills, talents, and so on.

As I began to see how Tessa seemed to adjust stories she lived according to expectations Mr. Ros and Mr. Cooper held for her, I could also see that perhaps Tessa let her marks slide as she tried to fulfill the expectations of her friends, expectations made visible in how these friends responded whenever Tessa received a good mark. As I considered the story fragments Tessa told in this way, that is, of playing up to teacher expectations and of not working to her academic potential, my initial understanding of them as criss-crossing and interrupting each other started to shift. I began to see how elements of one were elements in another in that they carried the same stories of "liv[ing] out or … up to" (Carr, 1986, p. 96) expectations of others. Considering Tessa's story fragments from this perspective, I saw them as narratively coherent (Carr, 1986). In a similar way, then, I also saw Tessa's living out or up to expectations Anne and John held for her as narratively coherent. As her time in River's Edge unfolded, Tessa joined both the basketball and soccer teams (transcript of a one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). Doing so fulfilled John and Anne's story of the importance for children and youth to be involved in team sports. As well, learning to sing or play an instrument was another story Anne and John had for their children (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, June 2004). During the time Tessa and I engaged in research conversations, Tessa exchanged learning to play piano for the drums because "you can always hear the drums and I thought it was pretty cool to play. So for Christmas all I wanted was drums and that's what [my parents] got me" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation,

October 2004). Still, while I could see living up to expectations of others was a story Tessa lived by, I do not wish to imply that this was the only reason she lived certain stories. For example, Tessa made visible her passions for playing sports in a conversation we had during Drama 7 when she talked about how she loved Physical Education classes and that she was on a community soccer team (field note, June 2 2004). Tessa also spoke about how much playing sports and the drums mattered to her during our research conversations. One such time was when I asked, "What would happen to playing drums and sports if your marks dropped too low?" and she responded by saying, "I would pay more attention in class … do more in class…. I would do it during lunch and not really have a lunch break…. I wouldn't quit anything" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, October 2004). Similarly, stories I saw Tessa as living in the Drama classroom seemed to be connected to more than just living up to Mr. Ros' expectations or to John's and Anne's stories that she was a capable student.

Negotiating A Curriculum Of Lives: Possibilities And Complexities

While I came to see how differences between Tessa's and my tellings of stories Tessa lived by in Grade 7 may have been shaped by differing teacher expectations, my curiosity grew around how a curriculum of lives (Huber & Clandinin, 2005; Clandinin et al, 2006) was being shaped within each of these contexts and, more specifically, how a curriculum of life was being shaped for, and by, Tessa. To provide a closer and more detailed look within the Drama classroom, I constructed the following interim research text from field notes I wrote about the learning task students engaged in over the first days of Tessa's Drama class.

Composing A Day-To-Day Drama Of Life In The Classroom

Working in partners, youth were to write, rehearse and act three scenes from their regular morning routines of getting ready for school. One person was to be the actress/actor and the other the reflection or mirror. Scenes could be chosen from youths' routines of: getting out of bed, personal grooming, eating breakfast, preparing and packing a lunch, travelling to school, and so on. Youth could partner with anyone of the same gender and approximate physical characteristics (size, length and colour of hair, etc). "Some of the partnerships stretched my imagination to see similarities between their physical characteristics.... A couple of times I heard Mr. Ros (in a joking tone of voice) ask about their physical similarities to each other. Sometimes the answers they came up with also seemed to stretch their imaginations but Mr. Ros respected their choices" (field note, April 23 2004).

Following Mr. Ros' explanation of the learning task to the whole group, youth spread out around the room. They seemed to sense it was okay to leave the stepped bleacher area where everyone had sat until that time. "Some searched out spaces on the stage while others stayed in the bleacher area. Some of the ones who stayed seemed terrified to go anywhere close to the stage, of those who went to the stage some seemed like they couldn't wait to be on it" (field note, April 23 2004). Mr. Ros moved around the classroom answering questions and providing suggestions. When the partners had their three scenes written, they checked with Mr. Ros who helped to identify, if any, areas that required further attention in their scripts.

Once the scenes were approved, the partners began rehearsing. "As I watched youth rehearse mirroring each other's actions, I realized this part of the learning task was much more difficult than I had thought it would be—they seemed to find it challenging to time their actions in unison and, often, fell into copying rather than mirroring each other" (field note, April 26 2004). Some partners grew frustrated with each other but I only saw Mr. Ros intervene directly in the tension between partners when asked to do so. Sometimes, the responses and suggestions he gave while circulating seemed to be enough to lessen frustration between partners. Periodically, Mr. Ros reminded youth of how much time they had left to complete the various parts of the learning task. A couple of times, they negotiated the timelines for additional time. Although some youth seemed to not need this additional time, they neither opposed it nor quit rehearsing. A few sets of partners linked together and acted their scenes for each other.

When it was time for youth to act out their scenes to the whole group, everyone gathered onto the bleachers. Youth were invited to volunteer to go first, second and so on. When partners were performing on the stage, everyone else was expected to give their full attention. For the most part, this happened. When it did not, Mr. Ros provided reminders as he linked youths' paying attention with expectations that they respect and support each other. When each set of partners finished acting, audience members provided response saying what worked well and suggesting improvements or alternative ways. Toward the end of each class

period, youth wrote reflections of their learning in their journals. (Interim research text based on field notes, April 23 - 28 2004)

As shown through the above interim research text, learning tasks in the Drama classroom began with youths' lives which, I imagined, made an easier and more comfortable beginning place from which to engage in learning. Starting in this place, youth came to learning tasks positioned, at least in part, as knowers. While each learning task included multiple prescribed learning outcomes, tasks were structured so youth could progress in relation to the learning outcomes in diverse ways and from differing beginning places in terms of confidence, prior knowledge and skills, talents and so on. In other words, learning tasks were constructed so that there were no singular correct answers or methods.

Youth also had choice throughout learning tasks. For example, in the learning task described in the above interim research text, youth chose their partners, which morning routines would be made into scenes, who would be the actress/actor and who would be the reflection/mirror, which details of their routines would be included, what actions they would use to portray their routines, and so on. When tension arose between partners, Mr. Ros intervened only when asked to do so. Otherwise, youth, by themselves, worked through the tension. However, I imagine if this tension would have prevented or continued to stay in the way of youths' learning, Mr. Ros would have intervened perhaps in a similar way to how he responded when youth were not fully attending to those performing on the stage.

In a similar manner to how Mr. Ros brought youth back on-task when necessary, youth were also encouraged to share this responsibility but to do so in ways that were

respectful. Timelines were also often negotiated. For example, in the above interim research text youth asked for additional time, whereas at other times they said they did not need all of the time allotted (field notes, April 29 & June 4 2004). Many learning tasks were undertaken in partners or in small groups but some were individual performances.

In their daily journal entries youth were expected to inquire into their learning. While some youth, in each of the Drama classes, seemed most resistant to this learning task they did, for the most part, engage it. From time to time, youth shared their journals with me. While each of them explored their learning, they did so in diverse ways. Some wrote long, detailed entries while other accounts were short and straight to the point. Some included only written text while others included drawings and diagrams. Some described what they were learning while others explored how they felt in the midst of learning. As evidenced in the above interim research text, learning tasks were self, peer, and teacher assessed and marks reflected individual progress in relation to learning outcomes. Achievement was not assessed according to how youth measured against each other.

In *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers* (Clandinin et al, 2006), as we picked up on Clandinin and Connelly's (1992) "vision of curriculum as a course of life" (p. 393), we wrote:

> We began to imagine how a curriculum could be seen as a curriculum of life, perhaps a curriculum of lives. Thinking in this way, of course, makes the composition of life identities, stories to live by, central in the process of curriculum making. It was in this way that we began to deepen our understandings

> of the interactions among the teacher, the milieu, and children. And as we attended to children's lives, we attended to multiple plotlines within each life, plotlines of child as learner, as learner of subject matter, as learner of his/her life, of his/her stories to live by. (p. 13)

During Tessa's and my research conversations we did not pick up on her experiences in Drama 7. Still, laying my understandings of Tessa during our time together in the Drama classroom alongside my field note of a first day class in the Drama classroom and, as well, the above interim research text, *Composing A Day-To-Day Drama Of Life In The Classroom*, created an opening from which I could wonder about how Tessa might have experienced the curriculum being made at the intersections of her life, Mr. Ros' life, other students' lives, and the Drama subject matter in the milieu of the Drama classroom at River's Edge School. How, I wondered, might the ways in which the learning tasks were constructed—beginning in youths' lives, inclusive of multiple ways of knowing, and where demonstrations of learning could be diverse—have encouraged and supported Tessa in caring about, and being capable of, doing work that would be considered as academically strong. Might Tessa have taken a lead in making group decisions and working with group members who were off-task in ways that brought them back on-task in response to Mr. Ros', as well as perhaps other youths', expectation that she push and support others in their learning? Might Tessa have risked volunteering to present her work first and be actively involved in whole group discussions because she knew others expected her to do so but, also, because she trusted that "no one would be laughing *at* … [her], no one would be making … [her] feel like … [she] wasn't doing as good a job as someone else and no one would be making … [her] feel stupid?" Was this trusting made

easier for Tessa because singular correct answers or methods were not commonplace in ways the Drama subject matter was being taught? Did Tessa feel a space to negotiate with Mr. Ros wherever he told her and her friends to move apart because they were talking rather than listening because she saw him as also living a story of negotiation in relation with youth?

As Gilligan (1982) considered how Kohlberg's six stages of moral development, as well as other psychological theories, claimed universality but were derived from a study of boys, she set forward the following "paradox:"

> Prominent among those who … appear to be deficient in moral development when measured by Kohlberg's scale are women, whose judgments seem to exemplify the third stage of his six-stage sequence. At this stage morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing others.... Yet herein lies a paradox, for the very traits that traditionally have defined the "goodness" of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development. (p. 18)

Drawing on the findings of three studies, the college student study, the abortion decision study, and the rights and responsibilities study, Gilligan explored that when girls face moral choices they seek to "maintain [their] integrity while adhering to an ethic of care in relationships" (p. 135). Yet, when these goals collide, as they often do in moral choices because girls feel a deep responsibility to how others might experience their actions and choices, Gilligan showed girls place the needs and feelings of others above their own. Bringing Gilligan's discoveries alongside my wonders about who Tessa was and who she could be in the Drama classroom, helped me see that perhaps when Tessa faced dilemmas

within this context she felt supported by the curriculum of lives being composed. For example, if Tessa experienced rubbing places between her desires to "work to my best and … get as good a marks as I can" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004) and working with group members who were off-task, in her attempting to bring them back on task she was both supported by, and supporting, stories of respect and responsibility being woven into the curriculum being constructed in the Drama classroom. That is, attempting to bring a classmate back on task in this context could be understood as an expression of caring for (Noddings, 1984) the classmate, other group members and Mr. Ros.

Returning, then, to Tessa's story of being assigned, from the outset of Grade 7 Science, to mentor Lisa raised additional wonders for me around the curriculum of lives unfolding in this context. My intentions or desires were not to draw comparisons between and among Mr. Ros, Mr. Cooper, Drama and Science but, rather, to understand how Tessa might have experienced who she was and who she could become within the curriculum of lives being shaped as her life intersected in the Science classroom with Lisa's and Mr. Cooper's lives, other youths' lives and Science subject matter. Recognizing that I did not spend time in the Science classroom, and therefore cannot know the curriculum being shaped in this context in the same way as in the Drama classroom, I realize I only have a glimpse into it through Tessa's story fragments.

Given that Tessa was assigned to mentor Lisa in the beginning days of Grade 7 Science made me wonder if youth were expected to begin the year with certain confidences, prior knowledge and skills, talents and so on and that what counted or mattered in this classroom was Science knowledge. Organized in this way, I wondered if

a hierarchical ordering among youth emerged where a student such as Tessa was positioned as *smarter than* and a student such as Lisa was positioned as *not as smart as*. If so, how might these stories have brought forward a story for Tessa in which she felt she needed to be responsible to, or perhaps for, Lisa's learning?

Gilligan (1982) helped me see how living out the story of mentorship, as it seemed to be constructed in the Science classroom, might have become increasingly problematic for Tessa as her and Lisa's relationship deepened and they became "best friends." To live up to Mr. Cooper's expectation meant Tessa assisted Lisa with learning the mandated Grade 7 Science outcomes. But, doing so also meant Tessa was positioning herself as smarter than Lisa. Looking out from this place, I realized, Tessa might have felt faced with a moral choice. That is, Tessa could either "maintain her integrity" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 135) as she lived by her story of wanting to fulfill Mr. Cooper's expectations of helping to improve Lisa's marks or "adher[e] to an ethic of care in [her] relationship" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 135) with Lisa and do whatever was necessary to spare her best friend from having to feel that she was not as smart. Perhaps, seeing no possibility within the stories being woven into the curriculum in this classroom where Tessa could live up to the story given to her by Mr. Cooper to mentor Lisa while also caring for Lisa, Tessa saw the only alternative to be to study to what she perceived was Lisa's "level" and to let her marks slide downward. Coming to this realization, I wondered how Tessa experienced Mr. Cooper's response to her declining marks in that, according to Tessa's story fragment, she and Lisa continued to sit and work together even though they "just talked a lot in class" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). Might

Tessa have experienced his not responding as an expression of not caring about either herself or Lisa?

Identity Image Stretches My Understandings Of Tessa's Family Stories

(Interim research text based on transcripts of one-on-one research conversations, September & October 2004)

While Tessa's declining marks seemed to be slipping past Mr. Cooper unnoticed the response Tessa received within her family when they learned about her Science marks

was significantly different. As storied by Tessa, both Melissa and her parents told her "you can do better" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). In this way, they showed Tessa that their story of her was that she could be more successful in Science and that they believed in her student abilities. Anne and John, according to Tessa, also responded by regularly emailing Mr. Cooper to "get what I was doing" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004). In turn, Tessa responded by not talking as much and participating more during class, which resulted in her grades going up[37]. Although Tessa storied that she made these changes because she "didn't want to get in trouble" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, September 2004), I sensed she was not referring to her loss of privileges or being told by her parents that she was not allowed to sit with, and talk to, friends during class. While I understood from the tones in Tessa's voice that she would have preferred if her parents and Mr. Cooper had not started an ongoing email dialogue, what mattered most to Tessa were the relationships she shared with each of her parents and with Melissa as well as the stories they held up for her about who she was and who she could be as a student.

In research conversations with Anne I came to know more about understandings Anne carried of Tessa as well as her two additional children, Melissa and George. The following word image shows something of her understandings.

Melissa
Doesn't say a lot
Noise, chaos bothers her
More of a thinker

[37] During Tessa's and my 2004-2005 research conversations, we did not discuss what happened when Tessa returned to the science classroom following her conversations with Melissa and her parents as well as her parents starting an email conversation with Mr. Cooper. When I shared back a draft copy of this chapter, Tessa explained that at the beginning of the class period following her parents' and Mr. Copper's first email dialogue, Mr. Cooper gave youth a new seating arrangement in which Tessa was moved away from Lisa and a few other youth were also moved. Tessa felt the other youth were moved to make her desk re-assignment less obvious (field note, September 6 2007).

Very reserved
Have to be in dire straits before asking someone for help
Doesn't get 100% or close
She's crushed
Her own worst critic
Something bothering her
Takes long time to say
Just kind of open the gate a little bit, a little bit
Eventually she'll say

Tessa
A talker
Comes in the door
I know what's happened at school
Know who she ate lunch with
Know who she rode the bus with
Know what happened on the bus
Tells me her day
No fear of talking to people, asking for help
Tries to be problem-solver
Negotiator

George
Somewhere in between Tessa and Melissa
Such an imagination
Designing a car
Something about snowboarding
Always thinking
A talker too

They're all so different
Very different
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, December 2004)

While Mr. Cooper seemed to place his story of Melissa onto Tessa, that is, that Melissa was a *good* student so, therefore, Tessa as Melissa's younger sister must live by the same *good* student stories, Anne's stories made visible differences between who her children were as learners and how their lives were composed along differing stories. Melissa, Anne storied as a quiet and reserved thinker who did not easily share her stories. Tessa, Anne storied as a talker who told stories of her day from the moment she got home

from school and who tried to be a problem-solver for others. George, Anne storied as somewhere between his two sisters, that is, as having a vivid imagination and always telling stories of imagined car designs and snowboarding possibilities.

As I thought about Anne's knowing of her children alongside what seemed to be Mr. Cooper's story of Tessa, I was reminded of Delpit's (1995) explorations into how we have created schools as "institutions of isolation." She wrote:

> We foster the notion that students are clients of "professional" educators who are met in the "office" of the classroom.... Nowhere do we foster inquiry into who our students really are or encourage teachers to develop links to the often rich home lives of students, yet teachers cannot hope to begin to understand who sits before them unless they can connect with the families and communities from which their students come. (p. 179)

Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) echoed Delpit's thinking when they wrote, "classrooms seem encapsulated, if not isolated, from the social worlds and resources of the communities.... Teachers rarely draw on the resources of the 'funds of knowledge' of the child's world outside the context of the classroom" (p. 134). These researchers' work called me to wonder how the curriculum being made in Science might have been different for Tessa if Mr. Cooper, Anne and John had connected earlier. In conversation with Anne, might Mr. Cooper have learned that while Tessa was capable of achieving high marks she was not the same student as Melissa? Might he have learned stories Tessa lived by as well as strengths and needs she had as a learner? Perhaps in the email conversations between Anne and Mr. Cooper, conversations which Anne and John initiated in response to Tessa's low Science mark, Anne had opportunities to share her

knowing of Tessa and to tell stories of Tessa's multiplicity. Still, I wondered how Tessa, John, Anne and Mr. Cooper might have experienced these conversations otherwise if they had begun as an inquiry into who Tessa was and how links might be developed between the curriculum of lives unfolding in Science and Tessa's rich home life rather than as a response to an already existing tension or issue.

Not unlike our earlier work that showed how children's stories to live by can be shaped by stories teachers live and tell of them (Clandinin, et. al, 2006), as I continued to bring story fragments Anne told during our research conversations alongside my unfolding identity image of Tessa, what became visible for me was the powerful place teachers' stories can have in parents' stories of who their children are and who they are becoming. In the following word image, Anne's words highlighted comments she and John often heard from elementary teachers about who Tessa and Melissa were as learners and the stories they lived by in classroom contexts. Anne's words also made visible stories that she and John lived as students and how, as a mother, she could recognize stories teachers told of Melissa because they more closely mirrored stories she had lived by as a student.

Melissa
"Quiet"
"Conscientious"
"Adds comments when called upon"
"Extremely bright"
"The best student"

Tessa
"Needs to be quiet"
"Distracting for other kids"
"Has hard time sitting, staying in her seat"
"Goes to see what others are doing rather than staying with own work"
"Needs to buckle down"
"Needs to work harder"

"Very bright"
"Could do really well"
"Not applying herself"
Still, getting high marks

Tessa's not me in a lot of ways
I was a very quiet student
More like Melissa
Very conscientious
If I didn't get 100% or close
Was ticked
Still remember
Teacher's notes on projects
"Too much work was put into project"
Wanted to do really, really well
Horrified if teacher reprimanded me
Told me to be quiet
Melissa's the same way
If reprimanded
Just dies inside

John
Sort of the opposite
High school
Didn't do really well
Just enough to get his credits
Finished high school
Got diploma
Extremely bright
Just wasn't into school
After we were married four or five years
Took Biology 30 at night school
He said,
"Just wanted to take a 30 course
See if I could do it"
Got 92% or something
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, December 2004)

Thinking again about how teachers at River's Edge had stories of who they imagined Tessa would be and, as well, how Tessa brought stories about the school with her to River's Edge, I wondered if stories Tessa's elementary teachers told about her were built upon each other as they were handed down from year to year to year. For

example, how did what Tessa's past teachers record in documents such as cumulative files inform her next grade teacher? I also knew from my experiences as a teacher that this passing on of stories can, as well, happen among teachers as they come together in the staff room, during staff and planning meetings and so on.

Laying stories teachers told of Melissa as a child in elementary school alongside those they told of Tessa drew me back to consider, again, Tessa's story fragment that from the outset of her time at River's Edge teachers called her "Melissa's little sister" and how Tessa embodied a story that she had "to be up to [Melissa]" (transcript of one-on-on research conversation, October 2004). I wondered if this story, that is, of needing to "live out or … up to" (Carr, 1986, p. 96) stories Melissa lived by, had emerged for Tessa in the midst of elementary school. Considering story fragments Anne told, I wondered if Tessa's "high marks" seemed to slip past teachers somewhat unnoticed as they gave their attention instead to Tessa's behaviour and how she did not *measure up* to stories they held of Melissa when she was in their classrooms two years earlier. Might the stories teachers told of Tessa been otherwise had they attended to Tessa's ways of knowing and learning rather than seeing her only as Melissa's younger sister? If Tessa's ways of knowing and learning had been the focus of the teacher's stories, might Anne not have experienced the stories they told of Tessa as "even though [Tessa] was doing well, I sort of felt like it was kind of negative" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, December 2004)? As Anne listened to Tessa being storied in these "kind of negative ways," might she have wondered if these stories might set Tessa onto a path similar to that which John experienced in school, that is, by the time Tessa was in high school that she, too, "just … [wouldn't be] into school" and would do "just enough" to get her

diploma even though she was "extremely bright?" Coming to know John's stories of school, might Anne have wondered what stories Tessa might have to tell and live out with her possible future children?

There was, however, a break or interruption in the stories passed down of Tessa. Unlike Tessa's former teachers, Ms. Balfour, Tessa's Grade 5 teacher, seemed to live out a story of coming to know Tessa for who she was and of working with Tessa in ways that drew upon and cultivated her strengths.

Ms. Balfour
First teacher
Pointing out positives
Liked that Tessa was talkative
That she's funny
Enjoyed Tessa's enthusiasm
Ms. Balfour [jogged]
So realized Tessa need for movement
Made Tessa classroom runner all year

Told me all the time
Tessa is such a great kid
Look at what great potential she has
Love her social aspect
How well she can get along with, work with everyone
A team leader
She is successful in school
Going to be fine no matter what she does

Helped me change my perspective of Tessa
May not be every teacher's dream student
But going to do fine, be successful
Whatever she chooses
Helped me understand Tessa
(Interim research text based on transcripts of one-on-one research conversations, December 2004 & June 2005)

Ms. Balfour lived out a story alongside Tessa and Anne that interrupted stories told by Tessa's former teachers. This interruption, Anne storied, helped her to understand Tessa in new ways and to restory possibilities for Tessa's future. Rather than being told

adjustments Tessa should be making in her stories to live by, Anne was hearing stories from Ms. Balfour of Tessa's strengths and that Tessa had "great potential" which would support her to "be successful" in "whatever she chooses."

Anne's story fragments also made visible how Ms. Balfour seemed to shift Anne's stories of herself as a parent.

Ms. Balfour
Made me
Accept, understand
Who Tessa was
Before, I was always going
"You can't do that."
"Why are you getting involved?"
Blah, blah, blah
You know, getting down on her too

I used to walk in [to conversations with Tessa's teachers] and go, "Oh no"
After Tessa's year with Ms. Balfour
I could kind of go in with a different look
Before they have a chance to say she's too …
I say,
"Isn't it great that she's really gotten involved"
Then it's hard to just tell the negative
I want to know the good and the bad
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, June 2005)

Anne's stories showed me how Ms. Balfour helped Anne to more deeply understand Tessa for "who she was" and, as a result, shifted Anne's interactions with Tessa as well as with Tessa's future teachers. Rather than understanding her role as Tessa's parent as limited to reacting to stories teachers told about who Tessa was and to trying to help Tessa make the suggested changes, Anne began to see herself as able to tell stories to teachers of who Tessa was as well as how Tessa's stories to live by could be understood in alternative ways. Anne's story fragments also seemed to show that she began to take

agency in focusing conversations between teachers and herself in ways that encouraged both an exploration of "the good and the bad" in Tessa's stories.

Creating A Web Threaded By Family And School Stories

Thinking about story fragments Anne told, I came to see in new ways not only the powerful place teachers' stories can have in parents' stories of their children but also in parents' stories of who they can be on school landscapes. I wondered if it was as Anne's stories of who she could be as a parent on a school landscape, and perhaps as teachers' stories of who Anne was as a parent, shifted that it shaped an opening for her to move into reciprocal parent-school partnerships. Exploring stories of parent marginalization and the dominant positionings in which parents are placed on school landscapes, Pushor and Murphy (2004) challenged the perspective "that parents are given place and voice in their children's schooling experiences" (p. 121). As they did so, they explored possibilities for reciprocal parent-school partnerships.

> When we advocate for using parents' knowledge, we are not downplaying the importance of teachers' knowledge or suggesting that it be replaced with parents' knowledge. We believe that teachers hold professional knowledge about teaching and learning that arises from their education and their experience. At the same time, we believe that parents hold personal, practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) of teaching and learning that arises from their experience of living with children. (p. 234)

Although stories Anne shared during our research conversations made visible that she lived a very busy schedule between family commitments and her work as a speech pathologist, she spent at least one day per week over an 11-year time span volunteering at

Melissa's, Tessa's and George's elementary school. As Anne storied her time and the work she did in the school she highlighted:

> I know everyone on staff. I feel very much, you know, I could just sit down and chat with any of them and figure out what's going on. I think they know … I just want to figure out what the solution is so that we can deal with it together. (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, December 2004).

> I know everyone at [name of elementary school]. I've been there longer than most teachers…. I feel like if anything goes on, I know. (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, June 2005).

Through Anne's stories I learned how significant her volunteering in her children's elementary school was as it opened possibilities for her to "know everyone on staff" and to feel that "if anything goes on" in the school "I know." And, I also learned how sharply this story shifted for Anne in relation with River's Edge School. Storying this shift, Anne said, "Even though I signed that I would be a volunteer, they [staff at River's Edge] don't call. In fact, I've never been called." As Anne spoke about her knowing of Tessa's teachers at River's Edge, she included "I don't know the teachers nearly as well. Some of them that Tessa has this term, I've never spoken face to face with and it's already December." Although Anne attended Meet The Teacher and Parent-Teacher Interviews, the typical events in my experience in which parents and teachers meet on secondary school landscapes, Anne's words highlighted how difficult it was to meet all of Tessa's teachers in these forums. Telling her experiences at Parent-Teacher Interviews she said, "If you get to meet with three [teachers] … that's it…. It's hard to get everyone booked

in" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, December 2004). As I thought about the vital place parents, and the knowledge they carry of their children, can have on school landscapes, I was drawn back to story fragments Tessa shared about how deeply the relationships among her mom and her teachers as well as her mom's work in Tessa's elementary school mattered.

My mom
Helped the school a lot
So she knew the teachers and they knew me well
Teachers knew what classes
I would probably go into best
So I got good teachers

Do you think that happened for all the kids?[38]
Probably not
Don't know all the kids as well

My mom
Used to do birthday books
On your birthday
You choose book
Dedicate the book
Like it was so and so's birthday on blah, blah, blah
Get your picture in the book
Book stays in school library
I know where my birthday books are off by heart in the library
And someone gets out your birthday book and goes
"Oh, I know that person"
It was really cool

Liked that mom came to school
(Interim research text based on transcript of one-on-one research conversation, October 2004)

Tessa's words highlighted she felt it was her mom's relationship with teachers that created a space for teachers to know and attend to her stories to live by. She also made visible that it was through the birthday books, a school program in which her mom was

[38] In the same way I italicized my words in the identity image I composed of Tessa, this text is also italicized to show it was a question I asked during Tessa's and my research conversation.

integral, that she felt her uniqueness celebrated and her presence in the school made significant both in the present and in the future. Tessa's words called me to attend to how it was a web of relationship linking together her family and school that lived at the heart of her unfolding life curriculum. In this way, as a researcher and as a teacher, Tessa's stories called me to see the necessity of inviting "student knowledge" (Murphy, 2004) about who they are and who they are becoming as well as family knowledge into curriculum making as she showed me how "storylines … combine to make up larger stories" as "elements of one … be[come] elements in another … by design" (Carr, 1986, p. 98).

Chapter Six: Attending To Identity Reverberations Shaped Within And Between Family And School Stories

Engaging in this narrative inquiry with Abby, Tessa and Muskaan as well as their parents, Anne, Geeta, Rishi and Jake, showed me that stories each of them lived and told were not linear. Rather, I saw that who they each are and are becoming was shaped by "stories inside stories and stories between stories" (Brody, Witherall, Donald & Lunblad, 1991, p. 257). As Muskaan's, Abby's and Tessa's, as well as their parents', storytelling moved in multi-directions it made visible that the tellings of their lives were complex and fragmented as they showed me continuities and discontinuities between and among family and school stories. Laying their tellings alongside stories of experience I brought to our narrative inquiry also made visible continuities and discontinuities in my understandings of curriculum making in relation to family and school stories. Awakening to these continuities and discontinuities deepened and shifted my understandings as a teacher and a researcher as well as my thinking about teacher education. In this chapter, I focus my attention, first, on Muskaan's, Geeta's and Rishi's stories, second on Abby's and Jake's stories, and third on Tessa's and Anne's stories as I explore what they have shown me with their lives about the interconnections between and among curriculum making, family and school stories. In so doing, I look forward to possible reverberations that may shape each of their future life curriculums as well as the lives of people who come to know their stories. In Chapter Seven, I attend to my expanded understandings of curriculum making in relation to teacher education.

After much consideration about how I would write this chapter, I decided to do so by returning to each of my three inquiry questions and responding with what Muskaan,

Tessa and Abby, as well as their parents, have helped me to learn through their stories. To begin, then, I made 3 tables, each with 3 columns. In the first column of one table I wrote "What have I learned by inquiring into experiences where Muskaan's, and her family's, stories to live by intersected, and bumped against, school stories?"; in the second column of the same table I wrote, "How has inquiring into continuities and discontinuities that Muskaan and her parents experienced deepened my understandings of social, cultural and institutional narratives shaping family and school stories?"; and, in the third column of the table I wrote, "How has engaging in this narrative inquiry with Muskaan, Geeta and Rishi expanded knowledge about the meeting of diverse lives on school landscapes?" I placed the same questions, adjusted to reflect Abby, and her family, and Tessa, and her family, in the columns of the other two tables. Returning, first, to the narrative account I wrote about Muskaan's unfolding life curriculum, I tried to organize my learning into each column. However, in so doing, I recognized my learning was interwoven across the questions of my research puzzle and could not be categorized into three distinct columns or questions. In this way, I realized that just as it had been critical for me to attend to and to honor the wholeness of Tessa's, Abby's and Muskaan's lives while also trying to stay wakeful to particularities unfolding in each of their lives, I knew I needed to attend to and to honor the wholeness as well as the particularities of my learning in relation to my research puzzle. Removing the lines separating the columns in each table, and letting my learning blur across the questions within my research puzzle, I imagined would, as Bateson (1990) explored, allow new visions to emerge.

Muskaan's, Geeta's And Rishi's Lives Composed Within Stories Of School

As I explored in my narrative account of Muskaan, I came to my inquiry with Muskaan and her parents understanding curriculum making as situated *on* school landscapes. That is, I saw curriculum making as emerging at intersections of youths' stories, teachers' stories, administrators' stories, subject matter and school stories lived out on both in- and out-of-classroom places. Living alongside, attending to and inquiring into Muskaan's experiences stretched my understandings of curriculum making as I came to see how her unfolding life curriculum was shaped as it intersected, and bumped against, stories of school composed by policy makers and enacted by central office personnel in an off a particular school landscape place.

In my narrative account of Muskaan, I wrote that I understood a dominant story shaping school and school district landscapes was to see curriculum as government developed documents which, for each subject area taught in school, provided program rationale and philosophy as well as a mandated scope and sequence including specific learning outcomes to be covered within an allotted timeframe. I also explored that woven within this dominant story was the view that teachers were transmitters of knowledge, skills and attitudes while students were empty vessels to be filled. And, while I highlighted that I did not share these notions but, rather, embodied narrative understandings of curriculum grounded in Clandinin's and Connelly's ongoing program of research, what I did not explore was that at one time I had subscribed to these dominant ways of thinking. It was not that I had chosen to see curriculum in this way but, rather, alternatives had not existed in my pre-service teacher education program and in school districts in which I taught. It was, in fact, not until I returned to university to take

up graduate studies after 8 years of teaching that I encountered alternative perspectives and, in particular, narrative understandings of curriculum as an experienced, lived and negotiated process. Initially, trying to understand curriculum narratively was uncomfortable as these ideas bumped against the *certain* and *unquestionable* knowledge I learned throughout my pre-service teacher education program and years of teaching. And, yet, the narrative conceptualization of curriculum to which I was being introduced felt exciting and filled with possibility, somewhat like Little (1990) described in her poem *Yesterday*.

> Yesterday I knew all the answers
> Or I knew my parents did....
> Yesterday I knew what was Right and what was Wrong
> And I never had any trouble deciding which was which.
> But today . . . everything's changing
> I suddenly have a million unanswered questions....
> Life is harder now . . . and yet, easier . . .
> And more and more exciting! (p. 88)

Rather than thinking of myself as a transmitter of knowledge, skills and attitudes, I began to see myself as a curriculum maker (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Instead of understanding curriculum as static government developed documents, I began to see curriculum as a fluid process always in the making which emerged at the intersections of youths' lives, classroom and school contexts, teachers' lives, and subject matter (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). Coming to see myself and youth as co-composers of curriculum shifted me away from "the idea that education is … something done to

people" and toward seeing it as "something that people do to themselves, and in so doing they grow—that is, they are educated. They do this not through passivity, but by engaging in situations, by taking charge of their inquiry" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 150).

In a similarly exciting way during graduate studies, I also came to more complex understandings of policy, and stories of school composed out of policy mandates, as pushed "down the conduit" onto school landscapes which, in turn, shaped the lives of those living on them (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). It was not that I was excited to learn how policy mandates shaped school stories, stories of school, teacher stories and stories of teachers on school landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; 1995) but, rather, I was excited by how these new understandings gave me a language to speak about and inquire into my experiences as a teacher (Huber, 2000). Still, it was not until my inquiring into Muskaan's experiences that I realized that while my stories to live by as a teacher as well as my understandings of the professional knowledge landscape of schools (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) had shifted, my thinking about policy continued to be shaped by the dominant stories I learned in my pre-service teacher education program and experienced day after day as an in-service teacher. In a similar way to how I initially understood curriculum as predefined and handed down to teachers and administrators who, in turn, passed it onto students, I also learned that making policy was not a part of my world as a teacher. It was, instead, the work of school board and government officials and, as well, was hierarchically positioned above curriculum. Policy was the root from which curriculum grew and, yet, in my experience as a teacher, there were many gaps, silences and contradictions between policy and curriculum. But, while in graduate studies, and

through my following years as a teacher, I learned to rethink my original notions of curriculum, the understandings I carried of policy, in many ways, remained intact as well as the distance I saw between policy and curriculum making. That is, I continued to see policy as made outside of, and at a distance from, the lives of those living on school landscapes. Once made, I saw it as filtered down the conduit onto school landscapes and shaping within each landscape an interconnected set of stories—school stories, stories of school, teachers' stories and stories of teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). I saw, then, how children's, youth's and families' stories and stories of youth, children and families were shaped within this interconnected set of stories (Clandinin et al., 2006). What came as a subsequent surprise as I inquired into the stories Muskaan, Geeta and Rishi told of the events that led to Muskaan being re-placed into Grade 9, were the profound ways children's, youths' and families' life stories can be shaped directly by policy in an off a particular school landscape place. I realize that my un-knowing (Vinz, 1997) of this aspect of policy was likely shaped by spending my life working on school landscapes and not in particular places off school landscapes. Coming to this awakening, leads me to wonder if this might be a shifting story in Alberta. That is, I wonder if children's, youths' and families' lives are increasingly being shaped by policy in an off a particular school landscape place as we push toward more standardized stories of schooling.

While I sensed it was hard for Muskaan, Rishi and Geeta to live through these events and, then, to recount them to me, and while, as I have already said, it was difficult for me to think through Muskaan's life curriculum being shaped by stories of school in an

off a particular school landscape place, their stories, as Basso (1996) wrote, keep "getting under … [my] skin:"

> One Apache [Elder] … describes how … [stories] … have a way of almost literally getting under your skin: That story is working on you now. You keep thinking about it. That story is changing you now, making you want to live right. That story is making you want to replace yourself. (p. 59)

In this way, Muskaan's, Rishi's and Geeta's stories of Muskaan being re-placed into Grade 9 continue to raise pressing questions for me. In particular, I am filled with questions about the possible ways this story might reverberate forward both in Muskaan's life as well as people who come to know the story. I am also pulled toward questions about the interconnections between policy making and the negotiation of a curriculum of lives.

Looking Forward—Possible Reverberations And Reverberations Of Possibility

Since writing my narrative account of Muskaan's experiences I have had opportunities to share it both formally at national and international conferences as well as informally with friends, family and colleagues working in diverse contexts such as schools, universities, Alberta Education and beyond. Regardless, it seems, of where and with whom I share the story of Muskaan being re-placed into Grade 9, response given back often starts from a sense of disbelief. For the most part, this disbelief emerges in relation to how such a story could have happened, particularly given that Muskaan had passed the provincially mandated Grade 9 achievement tests. For those who have knowledge of Alberta's education policy, disbelief also emerges around this particular school district's making of policy. That is, people have a hard time understanding how

this school district made policy which mandated that youth must be 15 years old to attend high school. People have also struggled to understand how this school district made policy requiring anybody coming to register in one of their schools, regardless of background including if they were moving from within or outside of Alberta or Canada, to take ESL and grade level assessments. Comments or questions have also been regularly given back to me about what cultural and institutional plotlines might be shaping this school district's making of such policies. Less often, I have received response that places the responsibility of this story onto the shoulders of Geeta and Rishi, as Muskaan's parents, as questions are raised about why they *let* Muskaan be re-placed into Grade 9, that is, why they did not do something to prevent this school district from carrying out this story.

In many ways I have not been surprised by peoples' responses of disbelief as I, too, have struggled to believe that school districts within Alberta hold the power to write over provincially mandated standardized assessments and, as well, to write over documentation provided by other school districts, particularly other Albertan school districts. Like those with whom I have shared this story, I, too, wonder how stories of school in this school district might be shaped by broader institutional, political and cultural narratives. For example, I wonder if these ESL and grade level assessments are connected with an increasing sense of pressure for higher and higher results on standardized provincial, national and international assessments (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2000; Kohn, 2000; Walters, 2004). Or, is it possible that woven into these ESL and grade level assessments is an arrogant perception (Lugones, 1987) of people new to Canada?

Considering response that places the blame on Geeta and Rishi, blame which emerges from seeing them as not doing enough to prevent Muskaan from being re-placed into Grade 9, I am left wondering what more they might have done. This line of thinking raises questions for me around how parents are positioned on school district landscapes and in relation with policies made on these landscapes. Geeta did try to tell school district personnel with whom she interacted that her children were not ESL and that they were simply transferring from another school district within Alberta. Geeta also provided documentation to the school district showing that Muskaan had passed Grade 9 in Alberta and, as well, the Grade 9 provincial achievement tests. She also showed a letter stating Muskaan had, in the first Alberta city where they lived, been accepted into high school. What more, I wonder, is it that we expect of parents trying to register their children into school. What avenues for response do parents, in this and other like situations, have open to them, particularly parents whose ancestries and backgrounds are not of the dominant social narratives shaping Canada?

In continuing to think about response I have received in relation to my telling of this story, I wonder what response Muskaan has, and may yet receive as either she tells the story or as people with whom her life intersects discover the story. This leads me to consider what effect this story might have had on teachers and administrators whose lives intersected with Muskaan during her second year in Grade 9. My sense from Muskaan, as well as from Rishi and Geeta, is that they never shared their tellings of this story with these teachers and administrators. Given Muskaan's story of being made fun of for having to "repeat the same class," I understood her unwillingness to share her experiences with others, particularly those on this school landscape. Still, might these

teachers and administrators have come to know that Muskaan was repeating Grade 9 through evidence in her cumulative file? If so, what stories might it have created for them? Did they support the school district's actions? Might they have seen Muskaan or her parents as at fault? Had these teachers and administrators faced moral choices as they considered who they were going to be in the story? That is, did they find themselves needing to chose between supporting school district policy even though doing so meant re-teaching mandated subject matter to a girl who had already proven she knew it or to risk raising questions about policies and decisions that led to Muskaan being re-placed into Grade 9? Did they find themselves needing to choose between continuing to write a curriculum for Muskaan that covered over her stories or to attend to who she was and modify her program so she worked on Grade 10 subject matter? I wonder, within the hierarchical organization of schools and school districts, what might it mean for teachers or administrators to ask questions about situations such as Muskaan's repetition of Grade 9. And, I wonder, what their coming to know Muskaan's experience might mean in their unfolding stories to live by as teachers and administrators. My hope is that this story supports them, as well as other teachers and administrators, in being attentive to how decisions made on school landscapes, decisions in which they play a part either through their voiced participation or their silence, can and do become life shaping events for children, youth and families.

During the summer following Muskaan's second year in Grade 9, she and her family moved to another Canadian province. As school or school district personnel in this province read Muskaan's cumulative file, I wonder, how they might have understood Muskaan's repeating of Grade 9. What stories might it have shaped for them? Had they

seen Muskaan as deficient? How had they understood who Rishi and Geeta were as parents? Might it have deepened or shifted their thinking about Alberta and the schools within this province? Given that the province to which Muskaan and her family moved is, in similar ways to Alberta, also shaped by intense immigration (Statscan, 2006a), my hope is that this story supports them in being attentive to possible reverberations the school policies in this province might have in children's, youths' and families' lives.

Since writing my narrative account of Muskaan, I have continued to think about how widening life opportunities for Muskaan and Raju lived at the heart of their family's decision making, including their decision to immigrate to Canada. Looking forward, I wonder how this second year in Grade 9 might continue to shape Muskaan's unfolding life curriculum. For example, as Muskaan submits applications for scholarships to attend post-secondary institutions might her applications be denied as those assessing applications pull on the taken for granted story (Greene, 1995) that children and youth repeat grades when they have not *measured up*? Might decisions of those reading her application for entrance into post-secondary institutions also be shaped by this commonplace story? If, in these and other situations, Muskaan has opportunities to explain her experiences, might her telling, similar to my sharing of the story, be met with disbelief? I wonder what these responses of disbelief might open up or close down. Might they open up possibilities for awakenings for those hearing her story, awakenings which, then, reverberate into their future decision making in relation with post-secondary scholarship and entrance applications? Or, instead, might the dominant story of repeating a grade as shaped by being deficit be too strong; strong enough to write over Muskaan's

recounting of this story; strong enough that her applications are denied[39]? What is clear to me is that the reverberations of this experience in Muskaan's life could be ongoing and, perhaps, have very real and hurtful consequences for her. What the reverberations become, I see, will depend on how each of us chooses to respond—do we open ourselves to the educative possibilities this story holds or do we let it be a mis-educative experience (Dewey, 1938) as we walk away from it either placing blame or excusing what happened by seeing Muskaan or her parents as deficit. My hope is, that if future reverberations for Muskaan are mis-educative as she transitions between high school and post-secondary, that she and her parents will reach out by asking people such as myself and the then principal of River's Edge School to share our tellings of this situation in Muskaan's life.

My hope is also that this story might ripple out causing shifts in both the making as well as the living out of policy. In trying to imagine these shifts I am drawn to what Nelson (2002) imagined as she described ways in which a community might engage in "mutual moral understanding" (p. 46). She explained such a process would be:

> *expressive* of who we are and hope to be: it is *collaborative* in that it posits, not a solitary judge, but a community of inquirers who need to construct ways of living well together. And because those constructions look forward, as well as backward and sideways, it is a view of morality in which the meaning of "now" is indeterminate and must wait on the event. (p. 46)

I imagine in shifting toward educational communities which engage in mutual moral understanding, processes of making policy at a distance from and, then, delivering it down onto children, youth, families, teachers and administrators on school landscapes

[39] I do not know if post-secondary institutions refer to transcripts of Grade 9 in their decision-making around entrance or scholarships.

will necessarily need to change. Rather than continuing to hold onto, and to live out, this dominant story of policy making, I imagine shifting toward Nelson's vision of communities engaging in mutual moral understanding will, necessarily, require an increased focus by policy makers to actively seek out and to be guided in their decision making by the stories that families, such as Muskaan's, live and tell of their past and present experiences and, as well, the plans and dreams they hold for their futures. I imagine this shift will require the work not only of policy makers, children, youth and families but also of teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers and politicians. Similar to how a negotiation of a curriculum of lives is a process that is always in the making and that attends to context as well as the fluidity of lives, so, too, needs to be the enactment of policy regardless of whether it is unfolding on a particular school landscape or in an off a particular school landscape place.

Abby's And Jake's Lives Composed Within Intergenerational Reverberations

As Young (2005) traced the experiences of Niin, a participant with whom she engaged in narrative inquiry into the connections between language and identity, she noted that the impact of Residential Schools on the lives of Aboriginal peoples is "intergenerational" because "it is still felt today" (p. 147). Exploring this impact, Young showed, how Niin's father's experiences in Residential School shaped his life which, in turn, shaped Niin's life which, in turn, was shaping the life of Niin's young son, Douglas. In this way, Young showed that because Niin's father's experiences in Residential School taught him to be unsure of the value of his Anishinabe language, he chose not to teach the language to Niin. Engaging in narrative inquiry with Young, Niin shared her struggles of not being able, then, to teach Douglas the Anishinabe language. Young referred to the

impact of the Residential School, as "(an) intergenerational reverberation" (p. 148) because what happened in Niin's father's life in the Residential School was continuing to shape Douglas', his grandchild's, life. For Young, "intergenerational reverberations" are narratively woven into the lives of family members across generations. She wrote, "we all carry in our bodies, in our memories, in our souls" (p. 162) the stories lived by our ancestors. In this way, these stories shape "intergenerational narrative reverberations" (p. 162) in the lives composed in successive generations.

Bringing Young's (2005) work alongside my narrative inquiry with Abby and Jake helps me to wonder further about who Abby is and who she is becoming in relation to intergenerational reverberations. That is, how was and is Abby's unfolding life curriculum shaped by Jake's and Suzie's unfolding life stories which, in turn, were and are shaped by each of their parents' unfolding life stories and so on? Thinking in this way, returns me to Jake's story of his first day in Kindergarten and to how his mom "got very mad" at him following her "long talk" with the teacher. As Jake storied this life moment, he explored feeling "unjustly treated" as his mom chose to listen to the teacher's story and not to his story about the day's unfolding events in the Kindergarten classroom. Thinking further about this story, I wonder how the story Jake's mom may have lived out in this moment, that is, of listening to the teacher's story and not to Jake's story, might have been shaped by her experiences as a child and youth in school. While, in our research conversations, Jake and I did not talk about his mom's told stories of her school experiences as a child or youth, Jake's stories, such as that of his first day in Kindergarten, gave me some insight into stories he felt his mom lived out alongside him during his time in school.

Writing my narrative account of Abby, I explored how Jake, in response to stories he felt his mom had lived alongside him in school, seemed to commit to not living out the same parent story alongside Abby and her teachers but, instead, to live by a story of being "always more than ready to fight for Abby with the teacher." In this way, I explored that I saw Jake's commitment to not carry forward the parenting story he felt his mom lived by as a possible "intergenerational interruption." Yet, in thinking further about Jake's stories alongside Young's (2005) explorations, I see that in addition to understanding this story as an interruption in a possible intergenerational family story it might also be understood as an intergenerational reverberation of the dominant structures and practices lived within schools. In this way, I wonder if the story Jake's mom may have lived out of listening to the teacher rather than to her child began for her not as a mother but, instead, from her experiences as a student in school. That is, perhaps, as a child and youth a dominant story of school Jake's mom had been taught was to see the teacher as the singular authority in the classroom and that her stories as student did not matter on this landscape. In turn, then, did she, as a mother, come to interactions with Jake's teachers continuing to live by these stories[40]? That is, was it as Jake's mom pulled forward a knowing, a knowing shaped from her experiences as a student in school that teacher knowledge rather than student or parent knowledge is what counts on school landscapes, that she lived out a story of foregrounding Jake's teachers' stories over her son's stories as well as her own knowing of her son? And, was it, then, at least in part, as Jake experienced his teachers carrying forward stories of school such as teacher as singular authority in the classroom

[40] I do not wish to imply that stories of school such as teacher being the sole authority in the classroom began during Jake's mom's time as a child and youth in school. Rather, I imagine this story of school has roots that stretch many generations back in time and may also have shaped Jake's grandparents stories to live by as children and youth in school and, therefore, parent stories they lived alongside Jake's mom during her time in school, and so on.

alongside his feelings that his mom was confirming this story of school, that, over time, it shaped within Jake an understanding of teachers as "verbally abusive," "emotionally not understanding," "mean to kids" and so on? In other words, I wonder how "the impact" of stories of school such as teacher as singular authority in the classroom, a story of school that Jake's mom may have been taught in school and that also seemed to shape Jake's experiences within school, might have led to the feelings Jake held of school and of teachers. And, I wonder how this impact might have led Jake toward living out stories of establishing himself "as somewhat of a bully" at a young age and that by the time he was in Grade 12 to say, "to hell with school…. I'm going to quit."

Coming to understand Jake's stories in this way, helps me further understand what Jake might have been saying to me when he storied how he "remember[ed] the day Abby started school" as "a real challenge" because his "own childhood resentment and feelings were just right there." I wonder, if alongside the "childhood resentment and feelings" Jake felt on Abby's first day at school was also very deep and real concerns about how Abby, as well as Abby's and his child-parent relationship, might become reshaped by the continuance of teachers' stories, stories of teachers, school stories and stories of school that Jake had experienced as a child and youth in school. Was it, I wonder, at least in part, from this place that Jake's commitment emerged to live by a story of being "always more than ready to fight for Abby with the teacher?" That is, was Jake so committed to having Abby not experience what he had in school that he was prepared to do whatever it took, including to fight for Abby with her teacher when necessary, to save Abby's life from being shaped in similar ways to how his life had been

in school and how his and his mom's relationship became reshaped in those moments long ago?

Inquiring into Abby's school experiences, particularly as she met with teachers who were, "subconsciously" or not, living out stories of being the authority in the classroom and, as well, teaching that there were certain "sparkling" ways to be and "things that were different were wrong," I came to see that, over time, what these stories shaped in Abby's life was a gradual taking on of a "given identity." In this way, then, perhaps in a similar way to how both Abby's grandmother's and Abby's dad's life curricula, both as children and as parents, had been shaped by intergenerational reverberations of dominant stories of school so, too, was Abby's unfolding life curriculum. Yet, unlike stories Abby's grandmother may have lived as a parent alongside Jake in school, the reverberations of these stories, at least in part, had shaped within Jake stories of teaching Abby to interrupt and push against teacher and school stories that silence the voices of children. While I do not know for sure, I wonder if Jake's living of this story with Abby emerged not only as he lived out a story of being "always more than ready to fight for Abby with the teacher" but, also, as he shared "interpretations of … [his] life story" where he did not "edit out the discontinuities" he experienced. Exploring this idea, Bateson (2004) wrote:

> The availability of multiple interpretations of a life story is particularly important in how the generations communicate with each other. When we, as parents, talk to our children about our lives, there is a great temptation to edit out the discontinuities, to reshape our histories so that they look more coherent than they

are. But when we tell stories to our children with the zigzags edited out, it causes problems for many … children." (p. 73)

Perhaps, it was as Jake shared stories of his life both in and outside of school, inclusive of the zigzags he experienced, that Abby felt able to also live out stories that zigzagged from the stories she felt others expected her to live by. For example, perhaps it was from Jake's stories that made visible zigzags in his life, Abby drew the necessary courage to name Princess Anne School as not being "right" for her even though she knew doing so bumped against Suzie's story. Perhaps it was also Jake's stories that led Abby to "research" finding a school that could be right for her even though she knew doing so bumped against school district policy that she attend her neighbourhood school.

Still, I have not forgotten, and imagine I never will, how as I wrote my narrative account of Abby, I came to understand that Abby's living out of stories of shutting down her emotions and of self-destruction emerged from being caught between conflicting family and school stories. Now, as I think further about the stories that Abby lived as her family stories intersected, and bumped against, teacher and school stories, I wonder if Abby's living out of these stories, as well as Jake's living out of stories of being "somewhat of a bully" and leaving school early, might be understood as intergenerational societal reverberations. That is, as a society when we hold onto intergenerational stories of school that silence children's and youths' voices in school and that value the continuance of smoothing out complex stories, such as Tenerio (2000) explored in how issues of race and power are "glossed over" in school, might children's and youths' living out of stores such as shutting down their emotions, becoming bullies, and leaving school early be the intergenerational reverberations of these stories of school?

Coming to understand Abby's and Jake's story fragments in this way helps me to also understand reverberations that emerged as Abby experienced teacher and school stories at River's Edge that were "so much more real." Engaged in processes of inquiry in Social and Language Arts[41] in which her learning was turned both inward and outward as Abby explored diverse perspectives and positionings and, as well, the deeper relationships that processes of inquiry call forward between and among students and teachers, Abby came to more "in-depth" understandings of diverse "subjects" and, as well, of who she was and who she was becoming. Reconsidering what Abby was telling me about her experiences in these courses draws me back, again, to Bateson's (2004) warning that "when we tell stories to our children with the zigzags edited out, it causes problems for many … children[42]." I wonder, then, if it was as Abby experienced curriculum making at River's Edge, unlike that which she experienced at Lakeside Elementary School, that was, at least in some ways, inclusive of youths' and teachers' ongoing lived experiences, questions, and tensions, that possibilities emerged for Abby to restory who she was and who she could become[43].

Looking Forward—Possible Reverberations And Reverberations Of Possibility

As I consider possible reverberations in Abby's life curriculum, I wonder how Abby's experiences in school and alongside Jake and Suzie might shape the stories Abby

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[41] While I did not write about Abby's experiences of subject matter and relationships with youth and teachers in other courses at River's Edge in my narrative account of her, stories she shared of these courses also suggested she experienced them as "so much more real" than what she had lived at Lakeside school.

[42] Batson (2004) explored the problems that can emerge for children as:

> A lot of young people have great difficulty committing themselves to a relationship or to a career because of the feeling that once they do, they're trapped for a long, long time. They feel they've got to get on the right 'track' because, after all, this is a long and terrifying commitment. (p. 73)

[43] As I made visible in my narrative account of Abby, I do not see Abby's "restorying" of herself as emerging only from differences between Lakeside school and River's Edge school. Rather, I see Abby's restorying of herself as also emerging, and perhaps in much larger ways, from her experiences in *Who Has Seen The Wind* and the Saturdays she spent at Prairie Theatre.

lives by as a parent if she eventually has children. For example, I sense that in Abby's future life, if she is to become a parent, she will not accept for her children what she experienced at Lakeside Elementary School. That is, as Abby's children tell stories at home of certain "sparkling" ways to be and that "things that … [are] different … [are] wrong," Abby will, through her storytelling that leaves in the zigzags she experienced, teach her children the inadequacy, disrespectful and profoundly mis-educative nature of these stories.

In a similar way as I consider possible reverberations in Jake's life, I am pulled to thinking more about how Abby's and Jake's stories showed me that intergenerational reverberations move in both forward and backward directions. While, it is commonly understood that the stories lived by older generations shape the stories lived by successive generations, it is far less common, at least in my experience, to understand that the stories lived by younger generations can reverberate backward into the stories lived by older generations. Again, I am reminded of Bateson's (2004) thoughts about how "when society is fluid, young and old alike need to improvise and teach each other" (p. 157). This backward and forward movement, I see, holds the potential for much change not only within school but society more broadly. For example, as I think about how Abby's stories of life in junior high school reverberated backward reshaping Jake's earlier stories into retold stories in which it was possible to like teachers, I wonder how Abby's passions for theatre might also reshape Jake's stories of what counts as a successful career and life. And, I wonder what might happen as Jake lives and tells these new stories to people with whom he works and others of his generation. I imagine that as his potential new tellings reverberate in the lives of people of his generation, dominant

societal and stories of school such as teacher as sole authority might become restoried. That is, as increasing numbers of parents begin, like Jake, to push against, and teach their children to push against, these stories might, then, possibilities widen for the lived experiences of children, youth, and families to count on school landscapes? My hope is that as teachers, administrators, policy makers, teacher educators, researchers, and politicians listen closely and carefully to these children's, youths' and families' stories and as parents listen to children's and youth's stories and to other parents' stories that, we might, together, "imagine how things might be otherwise" and, in so doing, bring "into being that which is not yet" (Clandinin et al, 2006, p. 175).

Tessa's And Anne's Lives Composed Within Interconnected Stories

> Our lives are so important that we tend to think the story of them begins with our birth. First there was nothing, then *I* was born . . . Yet that is not so. Human lives are not pieces of string that can be separated out from a knot of others and laid out straight. Families are webs. Impossible to touch one part of it without setting the rest vibrating. Impossible to understand one part without having a sense of the whole. (Setterfield, 2006, p. 59)

Setterfield, in her book, *The Thirteenth Tale,* highlighted the interconnectedness of an individual's stories to live by and their family stories. Living alongside, attending to and inquiring into Tessa's unfolding life curriculum, I came to see the interconnectedness of stories she lived. That is, that Tessa's stories to live by could not be separated out from family stories, teachers' stories, other classmates' stories, school stories and stories of school. This was profoundly apparent as I came to understand that who Tessa was and who she was becoming shifted at the intersections of her life with Mr. Ros' life, with

other students' lives, with Drama subject matter and with the milieu in the Drama classroom and, as well, at the intersections of her life with Mr. Cooper's life, with other students' lives, with Science subject matter and with the milieu in the Science classroom. Attending to this interconnectedness of Tessa's lived experiences, I saw how she was supported to live out stories that mattered to her in the Drama classroom whereas her stories to live by, it seemed to me, were written over in the Science classroom.

In a similar way to how I saw that an easy answer in response to the story of Muskaan being re-replaced into Grade 9 would be to blame personnel working in the school district central office or Muskaan's parents, I recognize an easy response to Tessa's experiences would be to blame Mr. Cooper and to see him as an incompetent, uncaring teacher. Yet, understanding Tessa's experiences in this way would, again, strip away the educative possibilities held within her stories. Rather than place blame on Mr. Cooper, perhaps our questions need to turn toward asking how stories Mr. Cooper lived alongside subject matter, Tessa, Lisa and others in the Grade 7 Science classroom might have been interconnected with school stories, stories of school, teacher and administrator stories and stories of teachers and administrators shaping the professional knowledge landscape of River's Edge. For example, given that during the time I spent at River's Edge it ranked number one among district junior high schools on provincial achievement test scores, I wonder how this story might have been shaping the school landscape as well as stories Mr. Cooper lived in relation with youths' learning of Science subject matter. How might his stories to live by been shaped by his trying to "live out or … up to" (Carr, 1986, p. 96) school, district and provincial expectations, expectations that increasingly foreground adherence to best teaching practices designed to push students' standardized

achievement scores higher and higher (The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2004)? What moral choices might he have faced between adhering to these practices and being attentive to the youths' lives with whom he worked in relation to their confidences, prior knowledge and skills, talents and so on. I realize, just as I needed to engage in ongoing conversations with Tessa to understand who she was and who she was becoming, that to understand stories Mr. Cooper lived I would need to hear and inquire into his experiences. And, in the same way, while I recognize it was "impossible to understand" who Tessa was and who she was becoming "without having a sense of the whole," so, too, would it be impossible to understand stories Mr. Cooper lived as a teacher without seeing them in relation with cultural and institutional narratives surrounding him.

Still, as I think about Tessa's experiences alongside that, at least in the school district where River's Edge is located, at the end of each school year children and youth must write a "high stakes" (Kohn, 2000) school district or provincial achievement test in core courses, I wonder, as we continue to push toward increased standardization of subject matter outcomes and demonstrations of learning, are we also pushing the curriculum commonplaces into disequilibrium? That is, by increasingly constructing school, political and societal milieus that foreground standardized assessments of standardized subject matter, are the life curricula of children, youth, families and teachers becoming correspondingly less significant and more vulnerable to being written over?

Parents' Stories Shaped At The Intersection Of Children's School Experiences

In addition to seeing the interconnectedness of Tessa's stories with teachers' stories, children's and youths' stories, milieu and subject matter, Tessa's and Anne's stories also challenged my understandings of curriculum making as interconnected with

family stories which are embedded within institutional, cultural and societal narratives. That is, Anne's and Tessa's stories, like Muskaan's, Rishi's, Geeta's, Abby's and Jake's stories, awakened me to how understandings I carried into this narrative inquiry were limiting my seeing the negotiation of a curriculum of lives as reaching beyond the walls of schools. I came to my narrative inquiry with Tessa and Anne, then, knowing that a child's or youth's unfolding life curriculum was shaped when her/his parents' stories intersected, and bumped against, subject matter, teacher stories and milieu. I also knew these rubbing places created possibilities for shifting my colleagues' as well as my stories to live by as teachers. While I could tell many such moments from my life as a teacher, I am drawn across time and place to the following story. Although by the time this story unfolded I had been a teacher for several years, it was my first experience working in a school where youth of diverse ancestries came together.

> Initially my attention was caught when a group of youth of Southeast Asian heritages began telling me about concerns and frustrations they were feeling over their becoming marginalized and declining marks in Physical Education classes. This was happening, they explored, because their parents' stories to live by prevented them from participating in the mandated subject matter of social dance. It was not that their parents had problems with dancing but, rather, were concerned about the close physical contact between males and females required in some western forms of social dance being taught in their children's Physical Education courses. As I listened to the tensions these youth were experiencing, their stories shifted my wakefulness to the dominance of western understandings in courses I was teaching. For example, their stories raised many new questions

> and learnings for me in relation with Canada's Food Guide. I began to see ways in which this Guide foregrounded eating habits and values of people from European, Christian, and middle-income backgrounds in terms of which foods were recommended and visually portrayed and, as well, the number of daily servings recommended for each food group. In the slowing down that this bump caused in my teaching, I realized like never before in my pre-service teacher education program and prior years of teaching, how some of the dominant messages portrayed in Canada's Food Guide had also not fit in my life as a child. Growing up on a farm in which, in the mid of winter due to the inability to regularly drive the distance to a grocery store because of weather and road conditions and, as well, to a persistent lack of money regardless of the season, I also did not frequently have "at least one fresh vegetable or fruit at every meal" and "eat at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week" (Health Canada, 2007). (Memory Reconstruction, January 2008)

While I came, then, to my research with Tessa and Anne recognizing that parents' stories to live by shaped their children's school experiences and, as well, stories teachers lived by, Anne's and Tessa's stories awakened me to how parents' stories to live by can be shaped as their children's lives intersect, and bump against, other children's and youths' lives, teacher stories, milieu and subject matter. I saw this first though Anne's stories of Tessa's early experiences alongside teachers in elementary school. As these teachers told stories of Tessa needing to "be quiet," "stay … seat[ed]," "[not be] go[ing] to see what others are doing [but] rather stay with [her] own work" and so on, Anne responded to these stories by also trying to mould Tessa to live in these ways. Thinking

about why Anne might have responded in this way, I realize she may have done so as the changes these teachers expected of Tessa were narratively coherent (Carr, 1986). That is, as Anne recounted stories of who she had been as a student, she described herself as "very quiet," "wanted to do really, really well," "very conscientious" and "horrified if a teacher reprimanded me." Anne knew that as she lived by these *good* student stories in her earlier life, teachers had named her as successful. As Melissa's life, Tessa's only older sibling, intersected with teachers in elementary school, Anne saw, again, how because Melissa's stories to live by fit within these *good* student stories, that she was also seen by teachers as successful. Wanting for Tessa to experience being successful in school, but realizing that she was not living within the boundaries of these *good* student stories, Anne began to shift parent stories she lived with Tessa. That is, as teacher after teacher called for changes in Tessa's stories to live by, Anne started "getting down on [Tessa] too." In this way, I saw, as Setterfield (2006) explored, "families are webs. Impossible to touch one part of it without setting the rest vibrating." I saw as Tessa's life was touched by teachers who lived by stories in which children were only seen as *good* when they were quiet, stayed in their seats, spoke only when directed to do so by the teacher, individually worked on assigned learning tasks, and so on, it set Anne's parent stories vibrating.

Coming to this realization, drew me again to Anne's story of feeling that "even though [Tessa] was doing well, I sort of felt like it was kind of negative." As I inquired into Anne's feelings in my narrative account of Tessa, I wondered if Anne might have worried that the negative stories teachers told of Tessa might be setting her onto a path similar to John and if Tessa, like her dad, might start living stories where she "just wasn't

into school." Yet, thinking again about Anne's feelings in relation with how parents' stories can be shaped as their children's lives intersect with teachers' lives, I wonder if Anne might have been telling me something more. Might she have been saying that she felt "it was kind of negative" trying to "live out or … up to" (Carr, 1986, p. 96) helping Tessa conform to teachers' expectations that she fit within *good* student stories, particularly when doing so meant ignoring that Tessa was getting "high marks?" Was Anne, I wonder, telling me that as her parent stories were shaped by the life curriculum Tessa was experiencing at school, that she was increasingly feeling pressured to live by parent stories that felt narratively incoherent to her, that is, stories where she, too, was expecting Tessa to change her stories to live by by also always "getting down on her."

Awakening to how Anne's parent stories were shaped as Tessa's life intersected with teachers, other children and youth, subject matter and school stories alongside Setterfield's (2006) showing that "families are webs" where it is "impossible to touch one part of it without setting the rest vibrating," leads me to wonder how these shifts in Anne's parent stories might have vibrated in Tessa's stories to live by. Wondering in this way draws me to think, again, about Tessa's story fragment of feeling that she needed "to be up to [Melissa]." While, as I explored in Chapter Five, Tessa shared feeling this way in relation with teacher expectations, now, I wonder might Anne's shifting parent stories have further shaped this feeling within Tessa. In this way, I wonder if shifts in parents' stories can cause their children to feel that they need to "live out or … up to" (Carr, 1986, p. 96) stories that are narratively incoherent to them.

As Ms. Balfour became Tessa's Grade 5 teacher, a profoundly different story of who Tessa was and who she was becoming emerged. In this story what former teachers

had seen as Tessa's limitations, Ms. Balfour understood as incredible strengths. Attending to story fragments Anne told of Tessa's life intersecting with Ms. Balfour's life, I saw how these new tellings of Tessa also vibrated in Anne's parent stories. Unlike Tessa's previous teachers who seemed to expect Tessa to fit within narrow and reified *good* student stories, and for Anne to live parent stories which supported Tessa to live within these stories, Ms. Balfour learned who Tessa was and who she was becoming and, in turn, lived teacher stories that supported Tessa's ways of knowing and learning. As Ms. Balfour lived these stories alongside Tessa, what vibrated in Anne's parent stories were deeper understandings of her daughter as well as a restorying of who Anne could be in relation with Tessa's, and I imagine George's and Melissa's, teachers. Rather than as before where Anne's parent stories were written over by teacher knowledge, Anne now saw her knowing of her children as necessary on school landscapes. In this way, then, Anne continued to open herself up to learning from teachers who Tessa was and who she was becoming as her life intersected with teacher stories, other youths' stories, subject matter and milieu and, as well, to learning how she, as Tessa's mom, could support Tessa's learning within these diverse relationships and contexts. Yet, now, Anne also lived parent stories of teaching teachers to more deeply understand her daughter and, in so doing, how they could support Tessa's ways of learning.

Thinking about how Anne's parent stories shifted as Tessa's life intersected with Ms. Balfour's life, brought me to wonder if, like Anne, Tessa also gained deeper understandings of herself, including restorying herself as a successful student during her year in Grade 5. While in my narrative account of Tessa I did not include Tessa's tellings

of Ms. Balfour, I now have new insight from which I can understand what Tessa might have been telling me when she said:

> My teacher in Grade 5, she's my favourite teacher … she never yelled at us … she would just make a joke and then we would get the idea. I still talked in class…. It was fun being in her class … I just liked to be there kind of thing. (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, October 2004).

> I think [Ms. Balfour] treated us more like grown-ups. Like from Kindergarten to Grade 4, we were sort of still like kids or whatever. But, in Grade 5, I don't know, it was just different. (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, April 2005).

Coming to realize how Ms. Balfour's stories to live by created shifts for both Tessa and Anne, leads me to wonder how Anne's and Tessa's shifted stories might have vibrated against each other and how these vibrations might live within story fragments Tessa told about the relationship she and Anne shared. That is, as Tessa storied who her mom was in her life she said, "I can tell her everything, she's not like a mom mom…. Me and my mom are like best friends, we get along so easily" (transcript of one-on-one research conversation, October 2004).

Looking Forward—Possible Reverberations And Reverberations Of Possibility

Writing my narrative account of Tessa, I shared a draft of it first with Tessa and, then, Anne as well as Mr. Ros. During Anne's and my conversation, Anne talked about how she had always imagined telling Ms. Balfour what a difference she had made in both Anne's and Tessa's lives. As a way to tell her, Anne asked if she could share my narrative account of Tessa with Ms. Balfour. Now, in my returning to think further about

who Ms. Balfour was in Tessa's and Anne's lives, I wonder how coming to know Anne's and Tessa's stories might vibrate in Ms. Balfour's stories to live by. That is, I wonder how coming to know Tessa's and Anne's stories might reverberate in Ms. Balfour's future work alongside children and families? Will she become increasingly attentive to how in the intersecting of her stories to live by as a teacher with children's lives, subject matter and milieu, that children's and their parents' lives are shaped in this intersection? My hope is that Ms. Balfour will share Anne's and Tessa's stories with colleagues on and off her current school landscape and, in so doing, that reverberations are shaped within these colleagues' stories to live by which, in turn, may lead to shifts in school stories being composed on their particular school landscapes.

In a similar way, I also wonder how parent stories Anne is currently living alongside her children's teachers might reverberate in these teachers' lives? My hope is that the stories Anne lives alongside them not only opens possibilities for them to more deeply understand Tessa and, as well, ways they can support her learning but, also, reverberates in stories they live in relation with other youth and their parents. And, as Anne shares her stories with parents whom she knows or comes to know, my hope is that reverberations are shaped in their stories of who they can be as parents on their children's school landscapes.

Thinking about these reverberations of possibility in parents' and teachers' lives leads me to also wonder about possible reverberations in Tessa's unfolding life curriculum. My hope is that she, too, will continue to live by stories of teaching her teachers to more deeply understand who she is and who she is becoming and, in so doing, it not only creates openings for them to learn to support her ways of knowing and

learning but, also, the diverse ways of knowing and learning of other youth. My hope is that Tessa will also live by these stories if she chooses to attend post-secondary school. And, if on these landscapes Tessa meets with narrowly defined *good* student stories I hope she will push against these stories being written over her stories. My hope is also that Tessa will hold on tightly to Anne's stories and, in the future, if Tessa has a child or children that she will enter onto her child's or children's school landscapes trying, like Anne, to live stories of composing reciprocal parent-school partnerships (Pushor & Murphy, 2004).

Responsibility Deepens as Understandings of Curriculum Making Widens

Looking across and inquiring into what Anne, Tessa, Abby, Jake, Muskaan, Geeta and Rishi have shown me through their experiences, I realize how my thinking about a curriculum of lives has both deepened and widened. Whereas before I saw a curriculum of lives as shaped by family stories embedded within cultural, institutional and societal narratives, I now see that the unfolding of a curriculum of lives among children and youth, subject matter, teachers, and milieu can reverberate into and shape family stories as well as cultural, institutional and societal narratives. That is, I see curriculum making as much more multi-layered in that while it is shaped in the meeting of a teacher's stories, children's and youths' stories, subject matter stories and school stories, each of these curriculum commonplaces is also shaping, and being shaped by, intergenerational family, cultural, institutional and societal landscapes. Understanding curriculum making in this way, then, I feel a much deeper responsibility in the stories I live by as I realize it is not only my stories to live by as a teacher that shapes curriculum making on school landscapes but also the stories I live by as a woman, researcher, daughter, Canadian and

global citizen, aunt, teacher educator, human being and so on. I realize it is, perhaps, a responsibility of the kind King (2003) was thinking of when he wrote:

> Take Will Rogers story, for instance. It's yours. Do with it was you will. Make it the topic of a discussion group at a scholarly conference. Put it on the web. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now. (p. 60)

Chapter Seven: Career & Technology Studies Teacher Education As A Landscape For Negotiating A Curriculum Of Lives

> Today … our guidance counselor said, "You have to decide who you are and where you are going." Sounds simple. Just decide…. I'd like to teach Grade Five but I want to write a symphony and live in a lighthouse and fly an airplane. I'd like to own an orchard or keep bees. I'd like to be a policewoman…. There are so many roads…. I'm not ready to choose and besides, I'm choosing more than one road. I'm putting myself together…. But it is like a jigsaw puzzle. I keep on finding new pieces…. There is no edge to me yet…. I hope I never discover an edge. (Little, 1990, pp. 86-87)

Like the girl in Little's story, my life is a jigsaw puzzle-in-progress where I, too, am putting myself together as I find new pieces and discover emerging possibilities. I, too, want to stay wakeful to not finding edge pieces and confining myself within them. In this chapter, I draw on many puzzles shaped through my inquiry, puzzles that I now bring to imagining a program of Career & Technology Studies teacher education[44]. In shaping this imagined program, I also draw on my earlier teaching experiences in Career & Technology Studies classrooms across the province and in teacher education courses, as well as on earlier research focused on the negotiation of a curriculum attentive to children's, families', teachers' and administrators' lives (Clandinin et al, 2006). I metaphorically place both alongside my more recent experiences with Tessa, Muskaan, Abby, Anne, Rishi, Geeta and Jake.

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[44] I focus on Career & Technology Studies teacher education in this chapter as it was this subject matter that initially drew me to becoming a teacher and, for the most part, that I have spent my life working within and trying to figure out in relation with youth and families with whom I have worked. It is also this subject matter and possible opportunities to work with pre-service Career & Technology Studies teachers that draws me toward imagining myself as a teacher educator.

In this chapter, as in earlier chapters, I move both forward and backward all the while holding onto questions of who I am becoming as a Career & Technology Studies teacher educator. Traveling backward, I reconsider Schwab's (1962) four curriculum commonplaces—teacher, learner, subject matter and milieu—in relation to my unfolding life curriculum as a Career & Technology Studies teacher. Moving forward within each commonplace, I explore how my work as a teacher alongside my narrative inquiry with Tessa, Muskaan and Abby, as well as their parents, helps me imagine who I am becoming as a Career & Technology Studies teacher educator. In this way, I am able to show, as Clandinin and Connelly (1992) described, that the four curriculum commonplaces "are in dynamic interaction" (p. 392). Attending to this dynamic interaction awakens me to thinking about many intersecting shifts of possibilities, shifts that draw me back to the earlier explored idea of liminality (Heilbrun, 1999; Kennedy, 2001), which is a process of negotiating life in the space between what was, what is and what might become.

Shifting Subject Matter Of Career & Technology Studies

Originally, Home Economics classes were designed to prepare young women for a life of homemaking (Wilson, 1900). However, by the time I took up a major in Home Economics in my B. Ed program and became a teacher in 1987, the subject matter of Home Economics had shifted beyond training girls to become competent homemakers, housewives, and mothers. Attention to issues of nutrition, fashion, healthy relationships, food-related illnesses, design, and so on were threaded into the subject matter.

While timetables in schools where I taught as a beginning teacher did not provide time for youth to take up various vocation education foci such as Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Business Education and so on, for the most part, these courses were no

longer gender-aligned. For a brief time, shortly after my beginning to teach, teachers of practical arts were encouraged through Alberta Education sponsored workshops to plan and to teach through the use of student-managed learning. Teaching and learning in this way, teachers explored diverse arrangements in which mandated learning outcomes could be met or organized and youth took on the role of putting together their learning in ways and in timeframes that worked for them. As a beginning teacher, I saw student-managed learning as opening up possibility and flexibility for engaging in learning and for representing knowledge in diverse ways. Still, subject matter was organized according to grade levels and, for the most part, all youth within a particular grade were expected to meet the same prescribed learning outcomes.

In the 1990s, Career & Technology Studies pulled together Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Cosmetology and Business Education. In this transition not only were various foci included within Industrial Arts, Cosmetology, Home Economics and Business Education separated into distinct strands[45] but new strands were also added such as Tourism Studies, Energy and Mines, Agriculture, Career Transitions and Forestry. This meant, for example, youth could engage in Food Studies subject matter without also being required to learn Fashion Studies and Community Health subject matter. As well, learning outcomes were no longer organized according to grades but, instead, as levels and a focus on career profiles was added to each course within each strand. This re-organization of subject matter created opportunities in some school contexts where, as colleagues and I listened to what youth and families were telling us, we worked together to design courses where youth circulated among strands in Career & Technology Studies.

[45] For example, subject matter formerly included in Home Economics (Family Studies, Clothing & Textiles, and Food Studies) became components within three distinct strands: Community Health, Fashion Studies and Food Studies.

This meant youth no longer needed to choose between Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Cosmetology and Business Education courses but, rather, could experience some strands formerly included within each as well as, at times, others such as Agriculture, Wildlife and Tourism Studies. However, for the most part, even with these contexts strands were held as distinct as each of us taught only subject matter firmly placed in our domain or that which was not already the domain of a specific teacher. For example, I predominantly taught Foods, Fashion and Tourism Studies whereas my colleague who had formerly taught Industrial Arts now taught Construction Technologies, Mechanics, and Wildlife while the former Business Education teacher taught Financial Management, Information Processing, Legal Studies and so on.

Moving to the city centre school where I taught most recently, my Career & Technology Studies colleagues and I worked to break down the historical boundaries which lived between our courses and that we, as teachers, had held in place as the edge pieces of our subject matter. Pooling our resources, we joined together to build a collaborative Career & Technology Studies program more responsive and responsible to the life dreams of youth with whom we were working, a program where youth flowed freely among teachers and classroom spaces depending on their desired learning and what they saw as their particular needs. Rather than starting with mandated learning outcomes, the hopes and dreams of youth became our beginning place as we worked toward engaging youth in understanding who they were and who they were becoming as learners as they inquired into, and simulated, diverse careers. Engaging youth in inquiry-focused career simulation experiences and in mentorship, which supported them to bridge school learning and future life possibilities, broadened our classrooms to include connections

with community and industry. Learning in this way, youth gained awareness and understanding of skills, technologies, knowledge and educational requirements needed in a range of careers while also meeting and going beyond prescribed Career & Technology Studies learning outcomes.

Creating portfolios, youth demonstrated their inquiries into a wide range of possible career/life possibilities as well as who they were and who they were becoming as learners as they showcased their attitudes, skills and knowledge. Some youth within our program successfully used these portfolios in gaining employment. While this portfolio-making became an integral aspect of supporting youth to work toward the futures of which they dreamed, it also seemed to support other reverberations. Similar to how life unfolded in active and interactive ways within our classrooms, so, too, was the portfolio-making in which youth engaged. Youth collaborated as they constructed their portfolios—often responding to one another's portfolios, sometimes engaging in peer-assessment of completed group projects, sometimes in helping a classmate to make a sample for her or his portfolio. In this way, living in more liminal spaces or ways both with each other as colleagues and with youth meant collaboration between and among youth and teachers in our Career & Technology Studies program became even stronger. For example, working with youth as they engaged in portfolio-making in this way, it no longer felt comfortable for us, as teachers, to be the sole voices on youths' report cards. In time, then, youth engaged in a form of self assessment where they wrote portions of their report cards in which they: explored their strengths as learners and identified areas of needed growth; highlighted concepts and skills learned as well as conditions which had supported or prevented their learning; and, outlined goals for future learning.

Negotiating this liminal space of assessment with youth meant that they authored the stories of who they were and who they wanted to become in relation with their experiences in Career & Technology Studies.

Bringing these stories of my experiences of teaching Career & Technology Studies subject matter, experiences which grew to include the negotiation not only of mandated outcomes but also assessment-making, alongside my inquiries with Muskaan, Tessa and Abby, I am reminded how they did not share many stories about their experiences in relation to subject matter or assessment. It is, then, but from a few stories that I draw some insight. In this way, I am reminded of Abby's stories of differences between her and her classmates at Lakeside Elementary School and to my wonderings if the divisions or separations she felt emerged as she and other children were measured against "certain" and " sparkling" ways and, as well, were taught that difference was wrong. I am also drawn back to Abby's stories of how, even though in junior high Social and Language Arts she was introduced to processes of learning that both challenged and expanded her perspectives, "Social … bore[d her] … to tears." Abby linked her boredom in Social to how she was not able to see relevance between what she was learning and her life, either in the present or in her imagined future. Thinking further about Abby's feelings toward Social, I wonder how her feelings might also link backward to her experiences with this subject in elementary school. In particular, I am pulled toward Abby's earlier understandings of culture and how she seemed to see her peers as either having or not having culture which, at that time, she seemed to base on visible ethnicity. In my narrative account of Abby, I explored how these categorical understandings of culture seemed to silence Abby's understandings of who she was and who she was

becoming, particularly in relation to her Chinese and Eurocanadian ancestries. Now as I continue to think about Abby's experiences in elementary school in relation with her feelings about Social in junior high, I wonder if Abby's seeing of this subject matter as disconnected from her life began for her in elementary school. Was it, in this way, then, that the irrelevance of subject matter taught in Social simply continued to pile up for Abby until she was "bore[d] … to tears?"

In a similar way, Muskaan and I did not, for the most part during our research conversations, explore subject matter she was learning or her feelings about it. I wonder if this was because several of our research conversations took place during her second year in Grade 9 and she was, as Geeta had worried, finding school "boring" because she was having to "repeat and repeat" and was not "learning anything new." Still, I am drawn back to how, during our time together in the Drama classroom, Muskaan storied how she experienced learning Drama in Kenya as "more academic." While, at the time, I did not explore with Muskaan what she meant by this, now I wonder, might she have been telling me that she was "bored" in Drama and perhaps, somewhat like Abby, felt disconnections between what she was learning and her present and imagined future life.

Today, as I think about Abby's, and possibly Muskaan's, stories of disconnections between subject matter and their lives, I wonder how their, and perhaps also Tessa's possible feelings of disconnection from what she was studying in school, might have shaped our limited exploration of subject matter during our research conversations. Returning again to transcripts of our conversations I see that, for the most part, whenever I raised questions about what they were studying, they responded by stating the names of topics or units being studied in different courses such as Economic Systems, Ecosystems,

Brazil, Space Exploration and so on. Whenever I asked more specifically about what they were learning or how they were feeling about studying a particular topic, they typically responded with "nothing" or "not much" and emphasized their words with a shrug of their shoulders. In this way, I wonder if, through their lack of engagement with these questions, they were telling me that they saw limited, if any, connection between what they were studying in school and their lives.

In thinking about Abby's, Tessa's and Muskaan's apparent disconnections with mandated subject matter outcomes and ways in which colleagues and I worked in the city centre school to engage youth in subject matter-making as well as in portfolio- and assessment-making that began from their lives, their interests and their dreams for their futures, I wonder, had Muskaan's, Rishi's and Geeta's story of public or government schools been the same as the story they held of private school, that is, that their voices mattered, would Muskaan's re-placement into Grade 9 been otherwise. Would portfolio- and assessment-making experiences have shaped spaces where Muskaan's rich knowledge of other places and cultures in the world, of disappointments shaped by dominant institutional narratives, and of family stories that created movements across and within continents, have pushed back against the school district's decision? And, as these stories of experience and the knowledge she carried as a result, became visible within portfolio- and assessment-making spaces might Muskaan's experiences in school have shifted? Would teachers have had a form of documentation that, alongside Muskaan, Rishi and Geeta, would have supported them to question the school district's actions? In all of this, I wonder how Muskaan might have become ever more present to her liminal travel as she inquired into who she had been, who she was, and who she might become

through experiences in and outside of school, in and outside of Canada. I wonder, as well, about Tessa's experiences in Science where it seemed youth were expected to begin the year with certain confidences, prior knowledge and skills, talents and so on and that what counted or mattered in this classroom was Science knowledge. If the beginning place in this classroom had not been measuring youth against mandated subject matter outcomes and each other, would Tessa have found herself uncomfortably positioned as Lisa's mentor? If the ending place in this classroom had not been measuring youth's success with these mandated outcomes in standardized ways, would Tessa have found more educative ways to express and, as well, to understand her tensions with how she became positioned in relation with Lisa? Had Mr. Cooper negotiated the more liminal spaces of portfolio- and assessment-making with Tessa, might he have shifted his stories of student mentorship and achievement? And, I wonder about Abby and if, along her educational journey she had been involved in portfolio- and assessment-making that included spaces for her life dreams, spaces where she could make visible and inquire into her passions for acting and the theatre, would she have felt so disillusioned about and separated from what she was learning. I wonder, as well, what new stories might have been shaped for Abby about her classmates and her teachers if they had collaborated in processes of portfolio-making and report card writing. I wonder how such experiences might have reshaped Abby's experiences with coming to live stories of self-destruction and of silencing herself. In these spaces, might Abby have voiced so much more about what she was trying to understand in her life and who she wanted to become in relation with the world

around her[46]?

If Abby, Muskaan and Tessa were experiencing subject matter and assessment as disconnected from their lives, and perhaps, then, as too boring or irrelevant to be explored during our research conversations, this raises interesting questions for me in relation with teacher education[47].

As a teacher educator, I see the necessity of engaging with pre-service Career & Technology Studies teachers in ways that encourage and support them to inquire into their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) of what subject matter and assessment is and could be. Using the three dimensions of narrative inquiry—temporality, sociality and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006)—to inquire into what brings each of us to be Career & Technology Studies teachers, I imagine we will uncover how our stories to live by in relation with subject matter and assessment are likely shaped by our experiences as learners across multiple educational landscapes. Engaging in such narrative inquiries, will, I imagine, open up questions about how we felt positioned, and positioned ourselves, as youth in school in relation with subject matter and assessment and, in turn, then how these experiences are shaping how we imagine attending to the intersection between youths' lives, subject matter and assessment. I imagine that this process will not end with inquiry into our stories but will become broadly expanded as questions like the following may emerge: Will we begin with mandated learning

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[46] While I did not specifically ask Muskaan, Tessa and Abby about portfolio- or assessment-making experiences in their school experiences, that they did not story anything even remotely similar, leaves me to wonder if such processes were part of their experiences.

[47] While Abby's, Muskaan's and Tessa's limited explorations of subject matter raises questions for me in general about programs of teacher education, I focus my attention on working with pre-service teachers becoming Career & Technology Studies teachers as it is within this area that I potentially imagine myself working as a teacher educator. I realize that the subject matter-making and assessment-making I explore in the following section are applicable to pre-service teachers learning to teach subject matter other than Career & Technology Studies.

outcomes and inform youth of when and how the required foci will be *covered* and *demonstrated*? Or, will our beginning place be the hopes and dreams of who youth imagine themselves becoming? Will we engage youth in constructing knowledge or set before them "certain" and "sparkling" ways and then measure them in relation to these ways? Will we foreground historical stories of training females to become office administrators, teachers and nurses as well as how to be good homemakers and take care of their children and husbands while training males to become vocational workers or *tradesmen* as well as good home owners? How will we open possibilities for youth to explore who they are and who they are becoming in relation with subject matter and assessment both within and outside of our programs? Will we ask youth to reflect on, and explore with us, their learning as well as their goals? How will we respond when youth tell us they cannot see relevance between what they are learning and their lives? Will we give them the all too familiar response, perhaps the response we received many times during our school experiences, of "because you will need to know it in your future" without exploring with them how or why it is necessary for their future[48]?

Living such processes of inquiry alongside pre-service teachers, I imagine my thinking about, and negotiation of, subject matter-making and assessment-making will continue to shift and change just as it has throughout my years as a teacher. Hamilton and Pinnegar (2000) explored how "we can make judgments about our practice as teacher educators only if we carefully study our practice" (p. 238). It is through studying our practices, they highlighted, that we become committed to making "whatever change … [is] needed in our own belief systems to be better teacher educators" and we learn to "act

[48] As Waldron, Collie and Davies (1999) shared stories of their experiences as teachers they highlighted the commonplace use of this response in schools.

with our students exactly the way we expected them to act with their students" (p. 238). In this way, Hamilton and Pinnegar showed, we "walk our talk" by "bringing together our beliefs and our actions" and we "expect from ourselves no less than we expect of future teachers" (p. 239).

Shifting Learners

As Canadian demographics change rapidly due to increasing Aboriginal populations and international migration (Statscan, 2005; 2006b) so, too, does the life diversity of youth and families in schools. Alberta's Commission on Learning (October 2003) in their report, *Every child learns. Every child succeeds.*, highlighted "diversity will be a hallmark of Alberta classrooms as schools welcome increasing numbers of children from other countries, traditions, languages and cultures" (p. 32). While I appreciate the Commission's attention to diversity in Alberta classrooms and schools, I am struck by their use of future tense. In each school context I have worked it is the already present diversity of youths' and families' lives that catches my attention along with how, particularly on my most recent school landscape in the city centre, their lives and futures are increasingly becoming wound into the growing statistics of early school leaving (Alberta Education, 2005; Canadian School Boards Association, 2006; Smyth et al, 2004). Far too often I hear the voices of youth with whom I have worked, as they explore the disillusionment and tensions they experience in school, echoed in the words of Mark, an early school leaver sometime in Grade 11 in the Smyth et al (2004) study in Australia. Mark explained:

> I did music. In Year 8 and 9, I played the organ; and that wasn't part of the curriculum, so I had to take up the clarinet. And I didn't like that at all so I quit.

> Blowing into a piece of wood didn't really give me that much satisfaction. The organ was what my grandfather did. (p. 53)

As a secondary teacher, I believed youth started the process of early school leaving in junior high. Yet, as I engaged in the research made visible in *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into lives of children and teachers* (Clandinin et al, 2006), I came to understand in ways I had not as deeply realized before, that children were engaging, and becoming engaged in, this process much earlier as gaps widened between their lives and subject matter, ways of learning, school and teacher policies and practices, and so on. Involved in research alongside children, families, teachers, and an administrator at two elementary schools, our attention was necessarily drawn toward the local, provincial, national and international statistics of early school leaving as we wondered what the future might hold for the children's lives in relation with school. We wondered, picking up on terms used by Smyth et al (2004), if some children in our narrative inquiries were already caught within stories of "dropping out," "drifting off" and "being excluded" from school. Being part of this research helped me attend in new ways to how these stories were also shaping the lives of youth with whom I was working in the city centre and were, as well, present in Muskaan's, Abby's and Tessa's, as well as their parents', stories.

Considering stories of "being excluded" draws me to Muskaan's, Geeta's and Rishi's stories of how their voices and experiences were excluded from, and silenced in, decisions made in the second Alberta school district Muskaan attended. Often, since coming to know the story of Muskaan being re-placed into Grade 9, I have marveled at the potential this story held for Muskaan to live out stories of "drifting off" from and

"dropping out" of school. I realize that had Muskaan's stories to live by, as well as her family's stories, been otherwise these stories may have become woven into Muskaan's unfolding life curriculum. Still, I wonder how Muskaan's life might continue to be shaped by this story. Might it influence her decision to continue into post-secondary studies? If, in the future, she becomes a mother might it impact stories she lives alongside her child or children? From Yeom (in progress), I learned that children and mothers who came to Canada to study English often make their first connections with families who have previously immigrated from the same country. I wonder, then, what stories Muskaan, Rishi and Getta might tell of life in Alberta schools to new families immigrating to Canada from Kenya.

Thinking further about stories of exclusion being lived out in school, I am also reminded of Tessa's and Anne's stories of the important place Anne's work in her children's elementary school had in both Anne's and Tessa's lives. Yet, when Tessa moved into junior high, and even though Anne signed forms sent out by River's Edge School asking if she would be willing to volunteer, Anne was never invited. In this way, then, I realize Anne's parent knowledge was excluded from River's Edge School and possibilities were narrowed for relationships to develop between Anne and Tessa's teachers, relationships which may have supported teachers at River's Edge to be more attentive to who Tessa was and who she was becoming. Thinking, again, about the interwoven nature of Tessa's and Anne's stories to live by speaks loudly to me of our need as teachers to know the children and youth with whom we work as well as their families.

As I think about this need, I see new possibilities for Career & Technology Studies teacher education[49]. As a pre-service teacher in the 1980s, the stories I carried into and negotiated during my teacher education experiences were profoundly silent, as I make visible in the following story.

> In the Fall Term of the second year of my B. Ed program I took a Nutrition course which had as a prerequisite a full year Chemistry course. The first assignment in the Nutrition course focused on a nutritional analysis of our dietary needs and eating habits. For one week we needed to track our food intake. Then, based on our age, we were to determine recommended amounts required for various nutrients and compare these numbers with the daily amounts we had consumed throughout the week. If gaps existed between our needs and eating habits, we were to determine both short and long term health consequences. As well, we needed to plan out a one-month daily diet in which we would meet, but not exceed, the recommended daily requirements for each nutrient.
>
> When the instructor returned my assignment, it was filled with red pen marks—most were "x's" and a few were written comments about how my analysis was inaccurate because I had used the wrong recommended daily requirements. I had received an almost failing grade based on the bell curve of my class. Shocked by my low grade, I re-checked the recommended daily requirements I had used with the course materials. Not being able to understand why the requirements I had used were wrong, I drew upon my courage and set up an appointment with the course instructor. During our meeting, the instructor

[49] I recognize the possibilities explored in this section could apply to programs of teacher education in general.

> explained that while I had written down that my age was 18 and had used the recommended daily requirements for someone of that age, it was not possible that I could be 18 years old and in a second year university course. She explained that I would need to be at least 19 and, therefore, much of my assignment was inaccurate information. Surprised by the instructor's reasoning, I explained that I was 18 years old and it was possible for me to be in a second year university course because I had started Grade 1 at the age of five and graduated from high school at 17. Again, my instructor informed me this just wasn't possible. In response, I provided my driver's license as proof of my age. This did not make a difference as the instructor explained she was finished marking these assignments and had no time to remark my assignment. (Memory reconstruction, March 2008)

After all the years I have carried this story it still brings forward much emotion for me. In thinking about this experience now many years later, I realize the emotions I feel in relation with it are less connected with my nearly failing grade and much more with the feelings of the lack of trust this instructor had in me. As well, being new to Edmonton[50] and feeling that my life in rural Alberta was quite invisible in this urban and university context, I felt in the moments in her office ashamed to tell this instructor that Kindergarten did not become an option in my home community until much later. For this reason, at that time and in this place, many children began Grade 1 when they were five years old.

Although I have not yet, myself, had many experiences as a teacher educator, over the years in which I have learned from Tessa's and Anne's lives, Muskaan's, Rishi's and

[50] I completed the first year of my B. Ed program within a university transfer program at a small college approximately 80 km from the community in which I was raised.

Geeta's lives, and Abby's and Jake's lives, they have often called me to think backward to my experiences as a Career & Technology Studies teacher and forward to possible ways in which I might engage in Career & Technology Studies teacher education. Moving backward in time and place, I am reminded of two moms, in particular, who were the first to show me the necessity of involving parents in classroom curriculum making.

It was Parent-Teacher Interviews and one mom wondered how I was experiencing teaching the Fashion Studies course in which her daughter was enrolled given the much larger than normal class size. She wondered if I was open to her coming to assist with the class. The following day I received a phone call from another mom whose daughter was in the same class. She was friends with the initial mom and was wondering if she, too, might assist with the class. Initially, I felt intimidated by the thought of the two moms joining our classroom as I wondered if their desires emerged from seeing me as incompetent at teaching their children. And yet, my personal practical knowledge told me something else. I felt that their offers were genuinely rooted in a desire to provide the youth in the class, as well as me, with assistance. To both moms, I explained that I was happy to have their assistance but first needed to hear their daughters' thoughts.

For the remainder of the school year, both moms regularly spent time in our classroom working alongside both youth and myself. Throughout the unfolding of this time, the moms and their daughters shared many stories of their lives, which, in turn, deepened my understandings of these girls' ways of knowing and learning. In addition, their storytelling seemed to support other youth to share

stories of their lives, stories which also encouraged my growth as their teacher. Having these moms become part of our classroom curriculum making and experiencing the richness their knowledge added, I wondered why I had never before imagined inviting parents as well as other family members into this space. (Memory Reconstruction, March 2008)

Fashion Studies was the hook that drew me into a B. Ed with a major in Home Economics. While experiences in Home Economics alongside my high school teacher had been part of this decision so, too, were experiences within my family. As a child my mom sewed most of the clothes my siblings and I wore. Often, especially when my mom's sister and her family visited, two sewing machines were set up on our large kitchen table and my mom, my aunt, my cousins, my siblings and I lived out wonderful days of sewing; my siblings, cousins and I made hand stitched clothing or blankets for stuffed animals while our moms sewed by machine, often remodeling their clothes to fit us, all the while laughing and telling stories of their young lives and learning to sew in a similar way with their mom, my grandmother. Although I had in my teacher education preparation or earliest teaching never considered living out a version of this family story in my teaching, as the term ended and the moms and I, now close friends, said goodbye to one another, I knew these two moms had forever shifted who I was becoming as a teacher.

In time, still as a junior and senior high school teacher, as Jean and I became drawn into the life stories of teachers with whom we engaged in inquiry at Ravine Elementary School (Clandinin & Huber, 2005), I was awakened in new ways to the interwoven nature of their teaching lives with their own families and of the interwoven

nature of their lives as teachers with the lives of children and families with whom they taught. For example, as we inquired into ways in which one teacher's stories to live by shifted as she interacted with children and families whose lives were different from her life, we highlighted:

> Sally used the experience of meeting children from different cultural heritages which she initially attended to because of their different sounding names to begin to shift who she saw herself as a teacher. At first she assumed she needed only to learn to pronounce their names and she could proceed to live out her stor[ies] to live by. She then awakened, as she interacted with one child's parents, to knowing that the child's family narrative was also a cultural narrative. She needed to learn more about the family's story of school. As she awakened, she began to scaffold … new stor[ies] to live by; one in which all children were not the same but were shaped by family and cultural narratives. (p. 57)

As I think about what it might mean in teacher education to understand that "all children … [are] not the same but … [are] shaped by family and cultural narratives," I realize that Career & Technology Studies teacher education classes need spaces where pre-service teachers can inquire into their family and cultural narratives, narratives that are woven into the teachers they are and are becoming. I recognize that it may not be practical as it was in my former Fashion Studies class to invite pre-service teachers' families who may live much physical distance away from campus, to participate in our teacher education classes. Still, by making spaces for pre-service teachers to share and inquire into artifacts and stories that they connect with their family and cultural narratives (Paley, 1997; Zemelman, Bearden, Simmons & Leki, 2000), could support our ongoing

attention to the interwoven nature of youths' and families' lives in Career & Technology Studies classrooms, and, as well, to their future reaching out to families of youth with whom they work to be involved in classroom curriculum making in contextual and relevant ways. These spaces in pre-service Career & Technology Studies teacher education could also include invitations to teachers, youth and families who are currently experiencing Career & Technology Studies in Alberta schools to hear stories of their experiences.

Shifting Milieu

While the diversity of the lives of children, youth and families in Alberta schools is increasing, schools are, at the same time, experiencing intensified pressure for accountability as measured through standardized mandated learning outcomes and accountability for these outcomes through standardized achievement tests (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2000; Clandinin et al, 2006; Couture, 2003, Darling-Hammond, 2005; Kohn, 2000; Walters, 2004). As a teacher and a researcher I understand and experience this political, social-cultural context as often shaping competing and usually conflicting school stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) in which the standardization of learning outcomes and achievement can deny or silence the stories of youths and families (Chan, 2006; Clandinin et al, 2006; Delpit, 1995; Greene, 1993; hooks, 1996; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005) as well as teachers' and administrators' personal practical knowledge of teaching (Craig, 2004).

Along with increased pressure in schools to achieve high scores on standardized achievement tests, is also a privileging of *academic* or *core* mandated subject matter outcomes. In the majority of schools in which I have taught this means students have less

or no time in Career & Technology Studies courses. It also often means Career & Technology Studies teachers deal with reduced budgets as well as fewer minutes in which to teach Career & Technology Studies because academic or core subject matter are given first priority. In this midst, as well, because the demand for Career & Technology Studies has not decreased, the class sizes in Career & Technology Studies courses are becoming significantly larger and, therefore, increasingly unsafe.

According to Brigham and Taylor (2006) "a central focus of the Government of Canada policy documents (such as Government of Canada, 2000; 2002) is on school-to-work transition programs that attract and retain youth in the trades" (p. 169). Similarly, Alberta Education is currently strongly focused on increasing the number of skilled workers in the province. Both of these federal and provincial initiatives are bumping with the focus on accountability for teachers and youth as measured through pressure for demonstrating the attainment of mandated subject matter outcomes in the four core areas. In many ways, Career & Technology Studies teachers are caught within these conflicting stories—on the landscape of their school as the area of Career & Technology Studies is devalued, Career & Technology Studies teachers feel devalued and, because of the broader provincial milieu exerting pressure for more skilled workers in the trades, Career and Technology Studies teachers feel pressure to not question the increasingly unsafe numbers of youth who are in their classrooms.

As I think about this complex situation in which Career & Technology Studies teachers find themselves, I wonder if the decrease in Career & Technology Studies teachers is shaped by teachers leaving Career & Technology Studies because they feel unable to manage hazardous working conditions shaped by inadequate funding to

maintain safely equipped labs (Alberta Learning, 2003) as well as being expected to teach groups of youth that often far exceed legal safety limits in industry and which, during my beginning years as a teacher, used to be in place in Alberta schools[51]. As I think about the possible interconnections between safety issues faced by Career & Technology Studies teachers and the decreasing numbers of Career & Technology Studies teachers, I am reminded of Rebecca's experiences, a first year Career & Technology Studies teacher.

> I felt privileged to be invited to join the mentorship program in the school district in which I worked and to engage in ongoing conversations with Rebecca. However, shortly after our conversations began, Rebecca began to talk incessantly about her needing to "improve her classroom management strategies." When I asked about what kinds of issues she was experiencing, she responded with many stories. Listening to her stories, I soon realized that Rebecca's naming of her struggles as *her* "problems with classroom management" seemed to be less about her abilities and more about the excessive numbers of youth in the Career & Technology Studies classes she was teaching. Given my knowing of the lab facilities in which she was working, I knew the numbers in Rebecca's classes were exceeded practical and traditional safety limits by at least 10-12 students. Alarmed by the class sizes she reported, I responded by telling Rebecca that while it was fortunate an incident had not occurred in which youths' and/or her safety was compromised, I felt she had both an ethical and legal responsibility to take up this conversation with her school administration. Sensing her resistance toward having such a conversation, I asked if she could talk with me about why she was

[51] As schools in Alberta shifted from programs of Home Economics, Business Education, Cosmetology and Industrial Arts to a program of Career & Technology Studies, the legal safety limits, or lab capacities, in these classrooms were eliminated (Personal Communication, Alberta Education, March 2008).

troubled. She explained she was afraid that having such a conversation might jeopardize her chances to be recommended by the principal for a future contract or that the temporary contract on which she was currently teaching would be revoked. I tried to assure her by telling stories about times when I had engaged such conversations with my school administrators. I explained that through my engagement in these conversations, I had realized it was often the case that principals were not fully aware of the safety issues that can arise when Career & Technology Studies subject matter is undertaken in class sizes that are too big for the facilities. Again, I reminded her that as teachers we have ethical and legal responsibilities for the safety of youth with whom we work. She reminded me that at the times when I had these conversations I was teaching with a permanent contract as well as carried a permanent teaching license. (Memory Reconstruction, March 2008)

What is equally as alarming to me as the stories woven into Rebecca's experience is the dramatic increase in early teacher leaving across the province. Although Alberta Education has not yet published the statistics they have gathered on early teacher leaving, these statistics show that approximately 30% of teachers leave teaching within the first five years. Breaking this statistic down, they show approximately 45% of teachers in their fourth year are leaving teaching (Personal Communication, Alberta Education, February 2008). I wonder, if we were able to trace these statistics back to the stories told by the teachers leaving the profession what they might tell us about the often conflicting narratives they feel caught within on the shifting landscape of schools and the broader social and political milieu. In hearing the personal accounts of these teachers, would

subject matter they taught become visible as an aspect influencing their decisions to leave? That is, would the stories told by these teachers show that there is a connection between the devaluing of particular areas of study and teachers' decisions to leave the profession? And, as described in the earlier section, *Shifting Learners*, teachers are not the only early leavers from schools. I wonder, in hearing the stories of early teacher and student leavers, if we might hear overlapping narratives.

And, yet, as plotlines of increasing standardization and the privileging of *academic* subject matter shapes schools and the lives of teachers and youth, the milieu of schools are also shaped by realities in which technology is rapidly changing and, so, too, are youth's life possibilities. Some careers have become or are becoming obsolete while new careers are emerging. In most, if not all, careers, the skills and knowledge needed is also shifting. In addition, societal narratives around education have changed with more jobs requiring postsecondary education. Brigham and Taylor (2006) highlighted that "the social polarization between young people who acquire the necessary educational qualifications and those who do not has widened, with the former more likely to become gainfully employed in more secure jobs and less likely to be laid off" (p. 167). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2000), young people in Canada described as holding "poor academic qualifications" are twice as likely to be unemployed as are young people described as being "better educated."

The shaping influences of these social and cultural narratives of education were also woven into each of the parents' stories to live by whom I learned alongside in this inquiry. Rishi and Geeta, for example, made visible this story of who they were as parents in relation with Muskaan when they told me of their decisions for coming to

Canada. Already in Kenya, when their children were young, Rishi and Geeta chose private school education because they had heard stories that in order for their children to be accepted into Western universities they needed private school, and particularly British private school, education. These stories shaped not only Rishi's and Geeta's parent stories, which in turn shaped Muskaan's and her younger brother's, Raju's, stories but they also shaped the destiny of their entire family, a destiny that brought them from a rural to an urban context in Kenya and then to Canada. This social and cultural shaping of their family destiny created a severing of Rishi's, Geeta's, Muskaan's, and Raju's day to day lives from the lives of former and current generations of ancestors and, as well, an intergenerational and thriving family business.

Anne, as well, shared stories with me that showed the shaping influence of these social and cultural narratives of education on the parent stories she lived by in relation with Tessa. As Anne showed in her storytelling, in part, the stories she lived by as a parent were shaped by her experiences of stories she learned to live out as a student in school—stories of sitting in her desk, talking only when the teacher called upon her and so on. As Tessa's older sister, Melissa, entered into school and lived out stories that did not rub with her teachers' stories or with the dominant stories of school, she was storied to Anne and John as a model, high achieving student. Then came Tessa, a girl storied to Anne as not living out *good* student stories and therefore, a student in need of becoming a better, more focused student. Until Tessa's and Anne's lives met with Ms. Balfour when Tessa was in Grade 5, the parent stories Anne lived by with Tessa were shaped by trying to change Tessa into a better, more focused student, a student whose stories not only fit within the stories lived by her teachers but, as well, with the stories Melissa lived by.

There was, as well, in addition to the ways in which Anne, herself, had lived out stories of being a *successful* student in schools, a second intergenerational story at work in Anne's and Tessa's lives and in their family's life. John, Tessa's dad, did "just enough" to get his high school diploma, an experience in his life that he seemingly felt some discomfort around as an adult as he worked to restory who he could be as a student by taking a 30-level course four or five year after he and Anne married. In the midst of this meeting of Anne's and John's lives, past and present, and Melissa's life with Tessa's life, there was, until Grade 5, few openings for Tessa to compose different stories to live by in school. John and Anne had completed school at a time when jobs were not as easy to find in Alberta, especially without having completed Grade 12. Knowing these realities, Anne worked to ensure that Tessa's life would not be negatively impacted because she was not *measuring up* in school.

Jake also knew the dominant social and cultural narratives of education, narratives that had shaped his young life in China, his eventual education in the United States and his subsequent immigration to Canada. Yet, unlike Rishi, Geeta, and Anne, who, as parents, lived out stories with their children that more closely fit the dominant narratives of needing or attaining a *good* education, Jake, because of his experiences as a child in school in China, developed a story of distrusting teachers. As he lived out this story as Abby's parent, Jake then, never completely fell into living out stories that fit with the dominant social and cultural narratives of education. That is, Jake was more focused on wanting Abby to feel confident in her identity and to have a voice in decisions, both in and outside of school, which shaped her life. But, as Jake's storytelling showed, living out these stories meant that he had little interaction with Abby's teachers, stories that

only became somewhat shifted through Abby's stories that teachers could be good, kind and caring people. While believing Abby's stories shifted some of Jake's former stories of teachers, this shift did not mean that he chose to become more involved with teachers or Abby's life in schools.

As I think forward to a program of Career & Technology Studies teacher education, while attending to the shifting milieu, I have much to consider. Thinking across my years of teaching which have included both rural and urban school contexts in Alberta, I see some increasing interactions among the four curriculum commonplaces at work. For example, when I taught in rural Alberta I experienced strong support for Career & Technology Studies subject matter. This strong support came not only from the school administration but, as well, from parents in the community and from youth. Perhaps, because this rural community was very agriculturally based, the multiplicity of support for Career & Technology Studies was shaped by the broader social and cultural narratives of the community. That is, because the majority of families earned a living by farming, which included both the need to understand nutritional and safe plant and animal growth and processing as well as aspects of community health and home-making, or that some families owned small businesses or worked in the forest industry, Career & Technology Studies was seen as supporting the next generation to compose lives similar to those of their parents and grandparents.

Coming to work in urban school contexts, this support for Career & Technology Studies seemed to be shaped by different social and cultural narratives at work inside of the schools and less in relation with youths' and families' narratives. In high school contexts, support for Career & Technology Studies seemed to be shaped by needing a

place to put youth who were seen as "not being academically competent" or as in need of learning English as a Second language. By placing youth into Career & Technology Studies courses in high school, this was determined to be one way that youth could earn enough credits to complete high school. As I moved into junior high contexts, particularly in my most recent experience in the city centre, the support for Career & Technology Studies seemed to be shaped by stories of needing to teach youth to eat healthy on a budget and to introduce them to healthy foods.

My awakening to the differing social and cultural narratives that seemed to shape support for Career & Technology Studies in the diverse school contexts where I have worked, causes me to think about my need, as a future teacher educator, to work with pre-service teachers in ways that support them to understand the fragile, uncertain and sometimes quite uncomfortable positioning of Career & Technology Studies within schools. As I think about how in some of my more recent teaching experiences, my beginning work as a Career & Technology Studies teacher has been to try to support youth to restory Career & Technology Studies as something much more than simply a context in which to get *easy credits* or that they were *not smart enough* to take academic courses, I see how these are important stories to be taken up, and inquired into, with pre-service teachers. Just as former youth with whom I have worked carried these limiting stories of Career & Technology Studies, I imagine that at least some of the pre-service teachers who come into Career & Technology Studies teacher education may also carry these or similar stories. Inquiring into their stories, I imagine will open up spaces for restorying what Career & Technology Studies could be in similar ways to how youth have engaged in this process. That is, restorying Career & Technology Studies from

stories of teaching about eating healthy food on a budget to engaging youth in meaningful, relevant, contextual possibilities that fit with the dreams they hold for their lives.

Shifting As Teacher

The government-developed mandate of Career & Technology Studies has not shifted significantly in the past 15 years[52]. However, as made visible in the previous sections in this chapter, who I am becoming as a teacher continues to evolve as I find new puzzle pieces and discover emerging possibilities. Developing strong relationships with youth, families and colleagues has been central in my shifting practices as a teacher. Coming to know youth in their multiplicity as well as tensions they, and their families, have experienced within schools, has continuously shifted how I think about, plan for, engage in, and assess curriculum making in Career & Technology Studies.

While living by stories of learning from, and with, youth and their families was important to me from the outset of my teaching, I cannot make the same claim about how I initially viewed or positioned myself in relation to colleagues on differing school landscapes. It was not that I lived by stories on these landscapes of overtly opposing learning from colleagues but, rather, that I never imagined learning anything *valuable* from them, or they from me, given that we were teaching different mandated subject matter outcomes[53]. Considering the unfolding of this story within my teaching life, I am reminded of Britzman's (1986) explorations of cultural myths that shape, and are shaped by, teachers as well as by the broader society. Inquiring into commonplace myths in pre-

[52] Currently, Alberta Education is reviewing and refocusing Career & Technology Studies. For the most part, mandated subject matter outcomes within the exciting 22 strands are not shifting but, rather, strands are being organized into five clusters with more credible learner career pathways being foregrounded.
[53] For the most part, I have lived my teaching life being *the* Home Economics or Food Studies and/or Fashion Studies Career & Technology Studies teacher on each particular school landscape.

service teacher education programs such as: "Everything Depends on the Teacher," "The Teacher As Expert" and "Teachers Are Self-Made," Britzman showed:

> The view of the teacher as expert … tends to reinforce the image of teacher as autonomous individual. From this perspective, teachers seem to have learned everything, and consequently have nothing to learn; knowledge appears as finite and unchanging. As a possession, knowledge also implies territorial rights, which become naturalized by the compartmentalization of curriculum…. Cultural myths promote a view of the teacher as rugged individual, a stance which bestows valor on the lonely process of becoming a teacher…. The image of the teacher as rugged individual stigmatizes negotiation and views social dependency as a weakness while it promotes autonomy as strength. (pp. 450-451, 453)

Thinking about distances that have separated colleagues' and my lives on school landscapes, Britzman calls me to wonder about the interconnections between stories I lived by in relation to colleagues and those I learned during my pre-service teacher education program. Being taught that "teaching [was] a matter of having a best bag of tricks" (Carter, 1988, p. 214) and that tricks were, for the most part, subject area specific, I completed my B. Ed program believing I had nothing to offer to, or learn from, colleagues who taught other subject matter. Now, in returning to think further about the stories I have lived alongside colleagues, I wonder how these stories may link back to my learning to compete against them during our pre-service teacher education experiences. It is with ease that I recall the fierce competition that was shaped among colleagues and me in our university courses as our course grades were determined by the use of a "bell curve," a curve where classmates and I knew from the outset of the course that a certain

number of us would fit into each grade category and that some of us needed to have failing grades. Reconnecting with these experiences in my pre-service teacher education program, I am curious about how stories of *subject area specialists* and, therefore, separation of subject matter have shaped my, and other teachers', living out of these stories on subsequent school landscapes? Being specialists, what could we possibly learn from, or provide to, colleagues teaching outside of our subject area? Given this distinctiveness of subject matter, how could we collaboratively plan or teach? And, would collaborative teaching be possible given our experiences with the bell curve? That is, even in naming ourselves as engaged in collaborative teaching would we, by living cover stories with one another, still be racing for the highest marks or being the best liked teacher among our collaborative team?

As I think hard about the cultural myths I learned in my pre-service teacher education and, in turn, lived out as an in-service teacher alongside my inquiry with Muskaan, Tessa, and Abby, I wonder if the roots of my stories that learning from, and working closely with, colleagues was not essential to my growth as a teacher might stretch further back in my life than to my pre-service teacher education program. Considering the *good* student stories placed onto Tessa, particularly during her time in Kindergarten to Grade 4, and knowing that these same stories shaped my experiences as an elementary and secondary student, I wonder if already in my elementary school experience I was learning to live by stories of needing to be a "rugged individual."

Bringing these stories and wonders to teacher education, I am reminded of a course experience I lived out alongside pre-service teachers in teaching *Active &*

Interactive Curriculum & Pedagogy in the Middle Years Classroom[54]. In this experience, pre-service teachers were invited to write, share and inquire into moments from their school experiences when they felt engaged in learning and when they felt disengaged from learning. Meeting in sustained small groups, the pre-service teachers shared their stories and provided response to each other. Learning from each other as well as metaphorically laying their stories and course readings side-by-side, the pre-service teachers explored insights they were coming to in relation to engagement in and disengagement from learning, teaching and assessment. They also thought through more responsive processes they might draw upon in the future to engage youth in their learning.

Now, several years later, re-visiting self-assessments the pre-service teachers wrote about their engagement with this experience, I am struck by how many of them explored their coming to see that engaging children and youth in processes of learning is so much more than simply delivering subject matter. Similarly intriguing to me is their exploration, as they re-connected with how they felt as youth living through moments of engagement in and disengagement from learning, into their recognition that ways in which they were coming to think about certain conditions, teacher and school practices, and so on as pre-service teachers was often contradictory to how they had experienced these conditions, practices and so on as children and youth in schools. Inquiring into their surprise over these gaps, some of the pre-service teachers explored how they seemed to be turning into the teachers with whom they had experienced disengagement from their learning—teachers who foregrounded marks, stories of competition and subject matter

[54] A pre-service teacher education course taught in the Middle School Teacher Education Program, a Collaborative B. Ed Program between University of Alberta Department of Elementary Education and Red Deer College.

outcomes placed in front of the children's and youths' lives. Writing about questions they still had or that this course experience raised for them, many of the pre-service teachers' questions centered around how they might stay wakeful to their taken for grantedness (Greene, 1995) without opportunities which pushed them to engage in reflection and inquiry, particularly with colleagues.

Re-reading these pre-service teachers' wonders and tensions, I am reminded of Hollingsworth's (1994) study into "sustained conversation." Meeting monthly with a group of teachers over a six year period, Hollingsworth showed how their conversations, conversations which did not adhere to pre-determined agendas, as a critical space "where questions could be posed, and issues involved in learning to teach could be raised and investigated" (p. 5). Lisa, one of the teacher participants with Hollingsworth, described their monthly meetings in this way: "our conversational approach provides teachers with a forum for sharing experiences, confusions, misconceptions (bias), etc. In this way, new insights are acquired from one another and new perspectives emerge" (p. 16). Thinking about both Hollingsworth's and Lisa's experiences in their sustained conversation groups alongside the questions and tensions raised by the pre-service teachers with whom I worked, I am reminded of how rare such spaces have been across the diverse school landscapes on which I have taught.

While this recognition of the rarity for collaborative conversations and inquiry on school landscapes would not stop me from still encouraging collaboration in and across teacher education courses or across subject areas on the pre-service teachers' future school landscapes, I would also encourage them to seek out or to compose these collegial spaces off their school landscapes. And, in thinking about my learning through this

inquiry as well as the centrality of youth and families in my former teaching experiences, I would want to make spaces in pre-service teacher education courses for thinking about the possibilities for taking up collaborative conversation and inquiry with children, youth and families.

Researchers such as Clandinin et al (2006), Griffin (2007), Huber & Clandinin (2005), Mitton (2008), Piquemal (2005), Pushor & Ruitenberg (2005) and Zhao (2007) have shown the educational importance of engaging in inquiries with children, youth, families, and teachers. I believe much possibility also emerges when children, youth, families and teachers design and take up collaborative inquiries. Children in a Grade 5 classroom and their teacher, Brian Schultz, documented the educative possibilities that emerged when they engaged in *Project Citizen*. The overarching goal of this inquiry was to "reach out and make change to public policy" so that children attending Byrd Community Academy, a Chicago public school, could "learn in a comfortable and safe school" (Room 405 Website, 2005). The children's and Schultz's motivation to undertake this project emerged from two desires. One was to make visible the current conditions of Byrd Community Academy, conditions which included: bullet holes through the windows; broken thermostats; no doors on toilet stalls; no soap or paper towel dispensers in the bathrooms; classroom windows made of bullet-proof plastic that had frosted over with age; non-working light fixtures; sinks and water fountains that leaked and, in some areas of the school, had been removed but not replaced; and, no gymnasium or large meeting area even though the school had been designed to serve 1200 students. Their second desire was to draw attention to how even though land had been purchased on which Byrd Community Academy was to be re-built, these plans had been dormant for

six years while schools in other Chicago communities underwent major renovations or were built new. Although at the time of documenting this project, there was no movement on behalf of Chicago Board of Education to carry through with commitments made to rebuild Byrd Community Academy, these Fifth Grade children and Schultz did draw both local and national attention as the story was reported in newspapers as well as on radio and television stations. In the drawing of this attention, questions were raised about the funding of public education, the discrepancies of education opportunities given to children based on race and socio-economics[55], the gentrifying of communities in which families are pushed out of low cost rental housing as it is torn down and replaced with high cost, predominately privately owned, housing, and so on.

I am deeply excited to think about how engaging in these inquiries, as pre- and in-service teachers, could reshape current school, university and broader landscapes. Imagine, for example, if Muskaan, Rishi and Geeta had been involved in sustained collaborative conversations and inquiry with pre- and/or in-service teachers, would Muskaan have been re-placed into and had to live out a second year in Grade 9? Imagine, for example, if Tessa and Anne had been involved in sustained collaborative conversations and inquiry with pre- and/or in-service teachers, would Tessa's earliest experiences in school have been so focused on changing her stories to live by? Imagine, for example, if Abby and Jake had been involved in sustained collaborative conversations and inquiry with pre- and/or in-service teachers, would Abby have felt so silenced and withdrawn from who she was and who she was becoming as she lived on the landscape of Lakeside Elementary School? Imagine what pre-service and in-service teachers might

[55] All of the children who attended Byrd Community Academy were African-American and lived in nearby housing developments.

learn about who they are becoming as teachers as well as family stories and cultural, institutional and societal narratives by engaging in these conversations and inquiries.

I imagine that each of these potential sustained collaborative conversations and inquiries might have some potential for reverberating back onto school, university and broader landscapes. And, what if, in hearing about this possibility, other youth, parents, pre- and in-service teachers, policy-makers, researchers and teacher educators joined into their sustained collaborative conversations and inquiry. The potential is, I believe, enormous.

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